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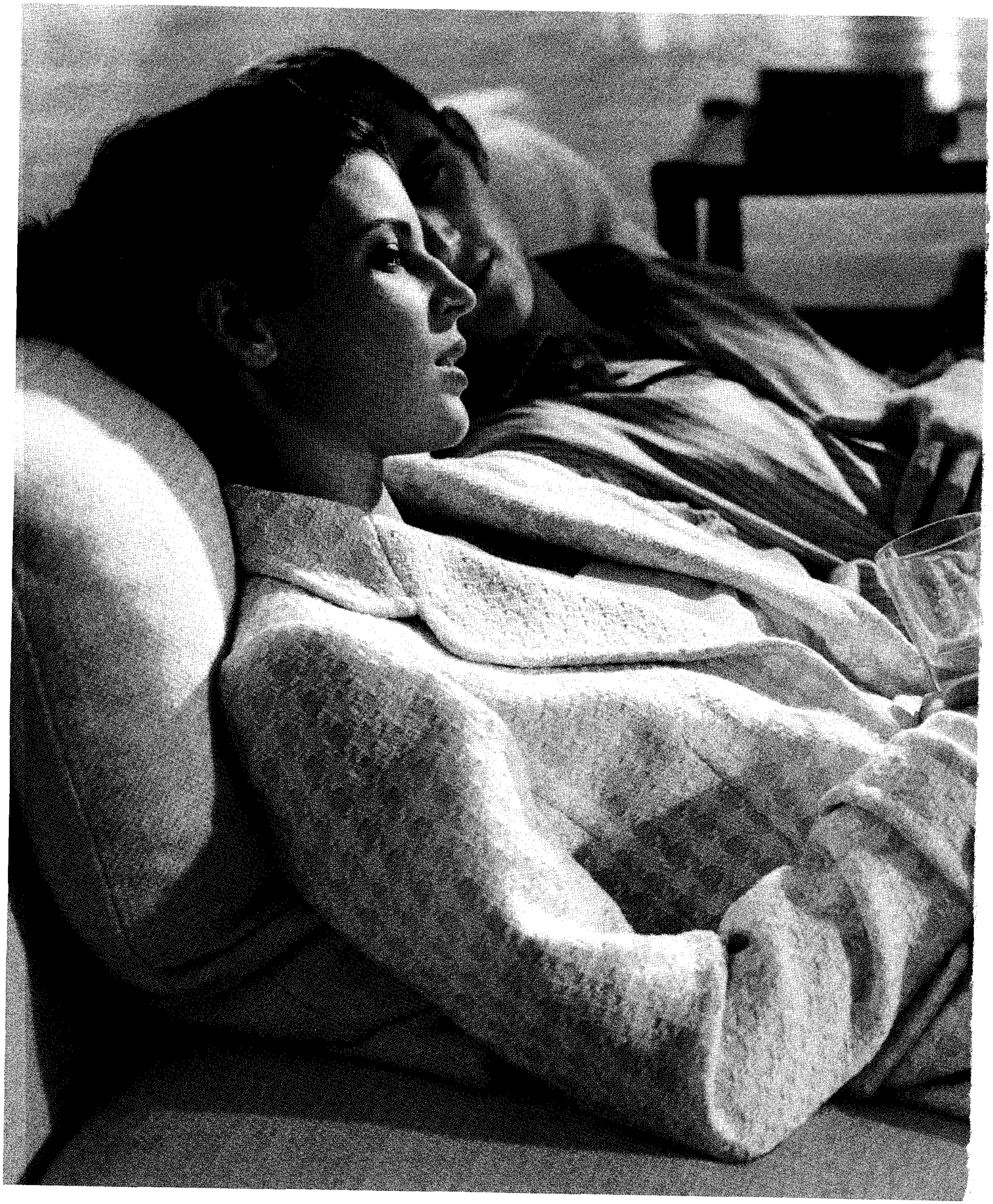

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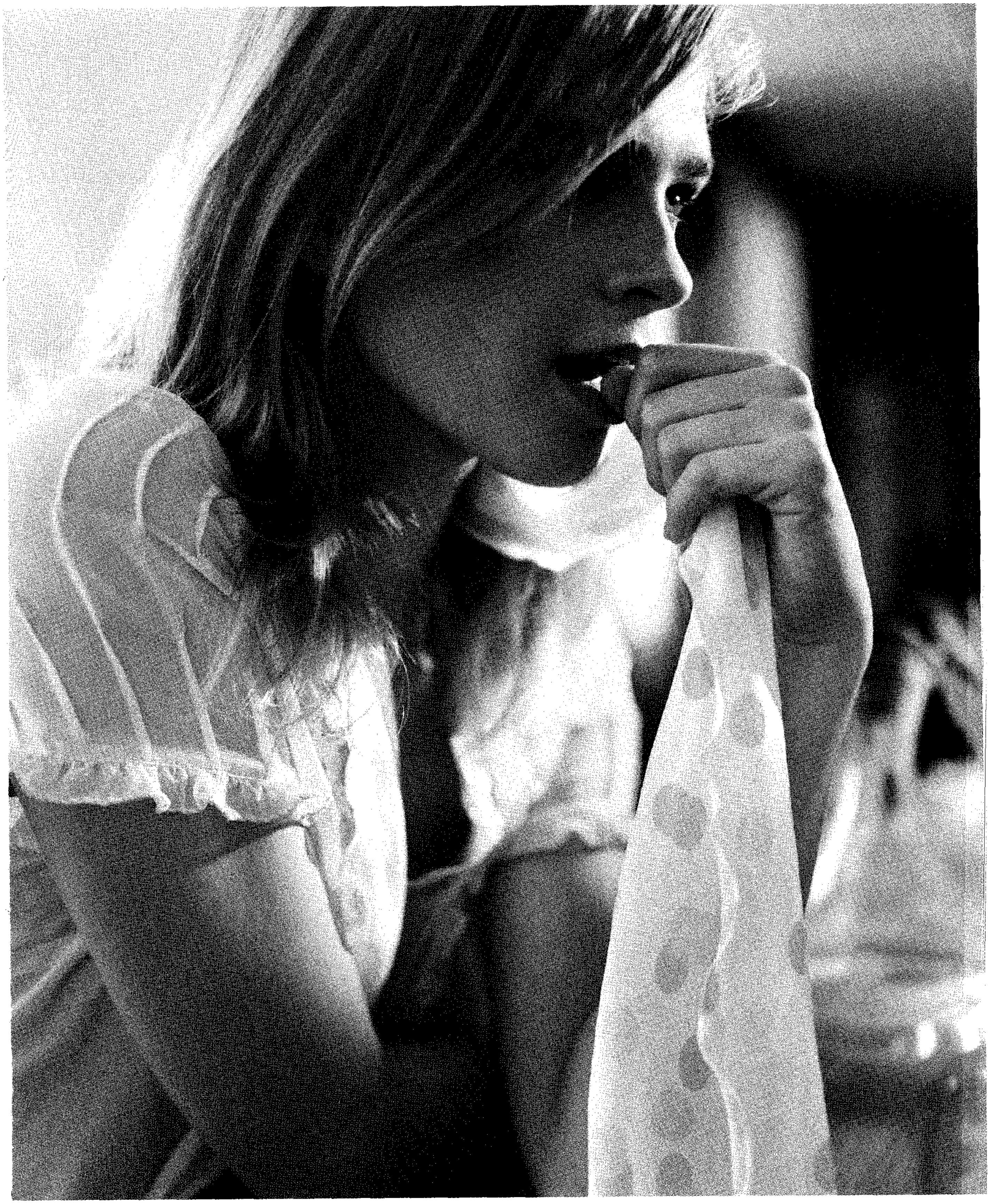

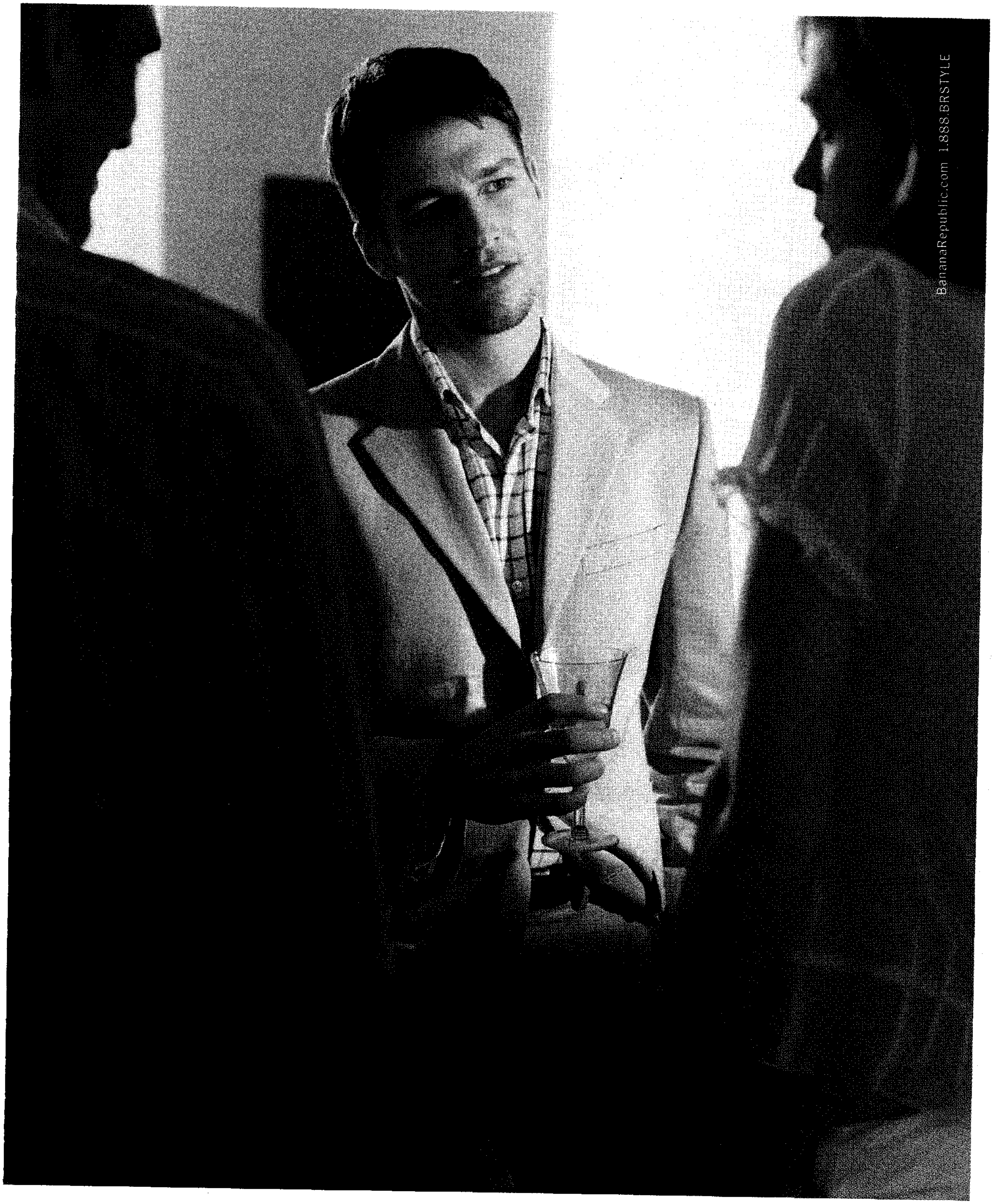
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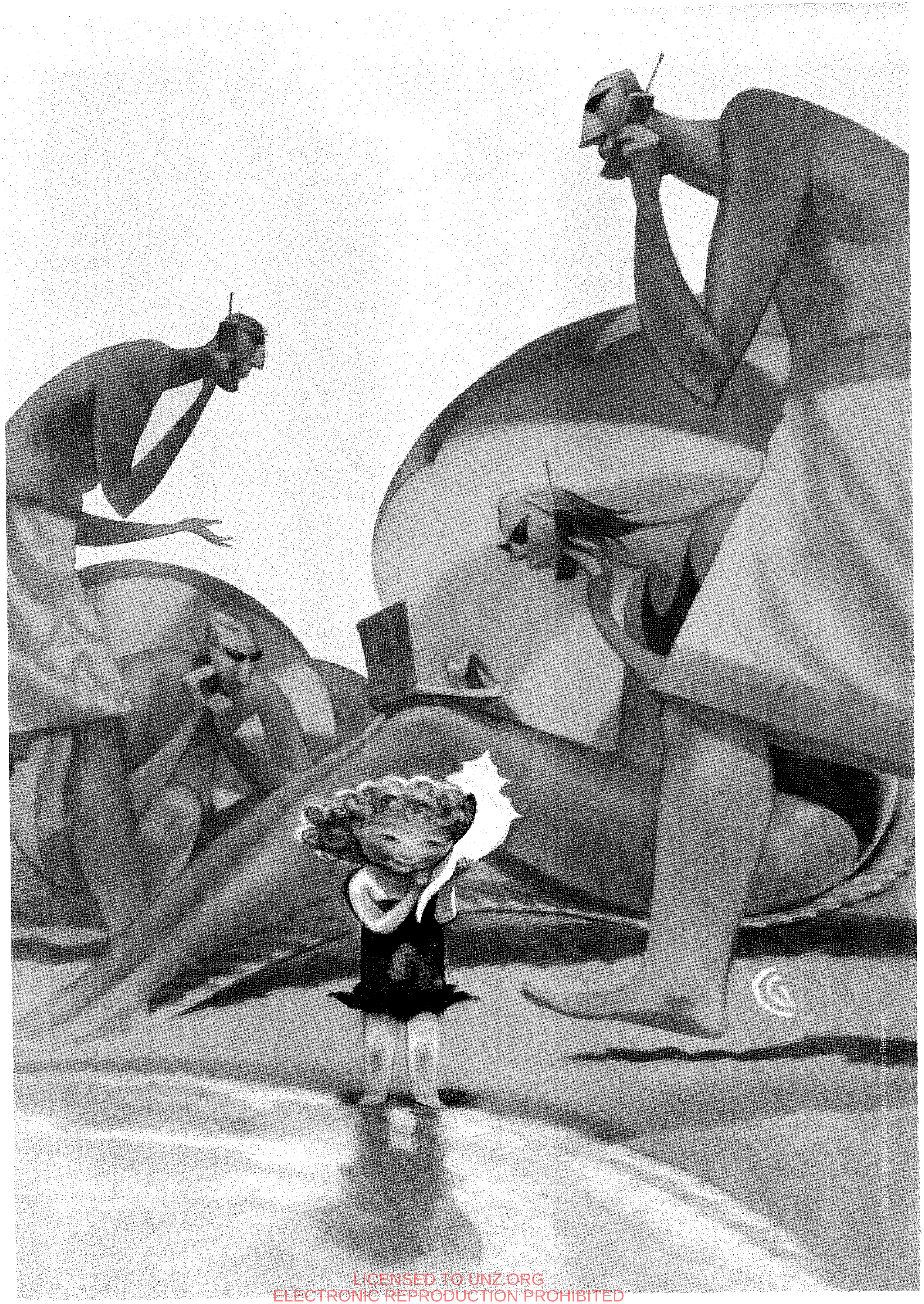

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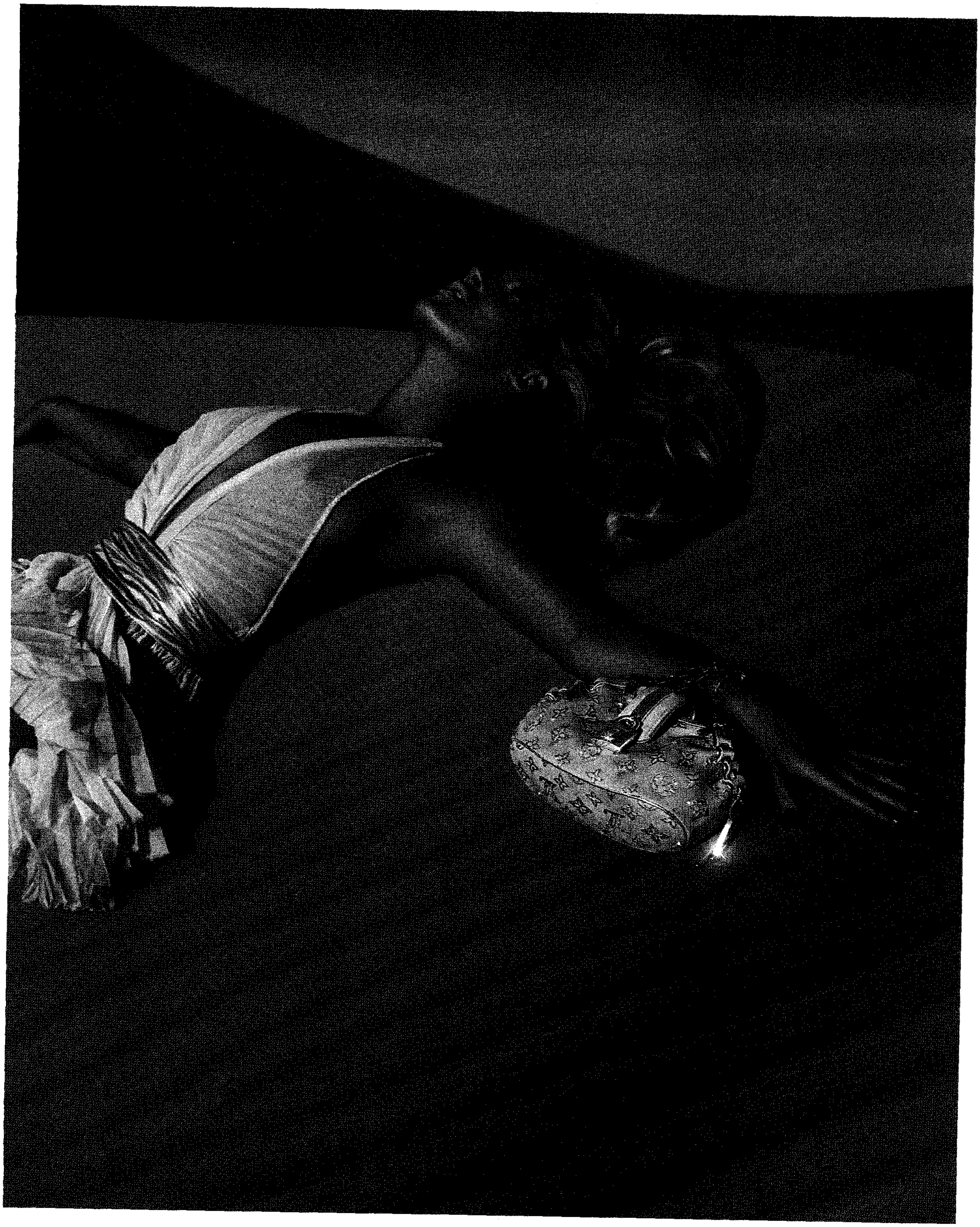

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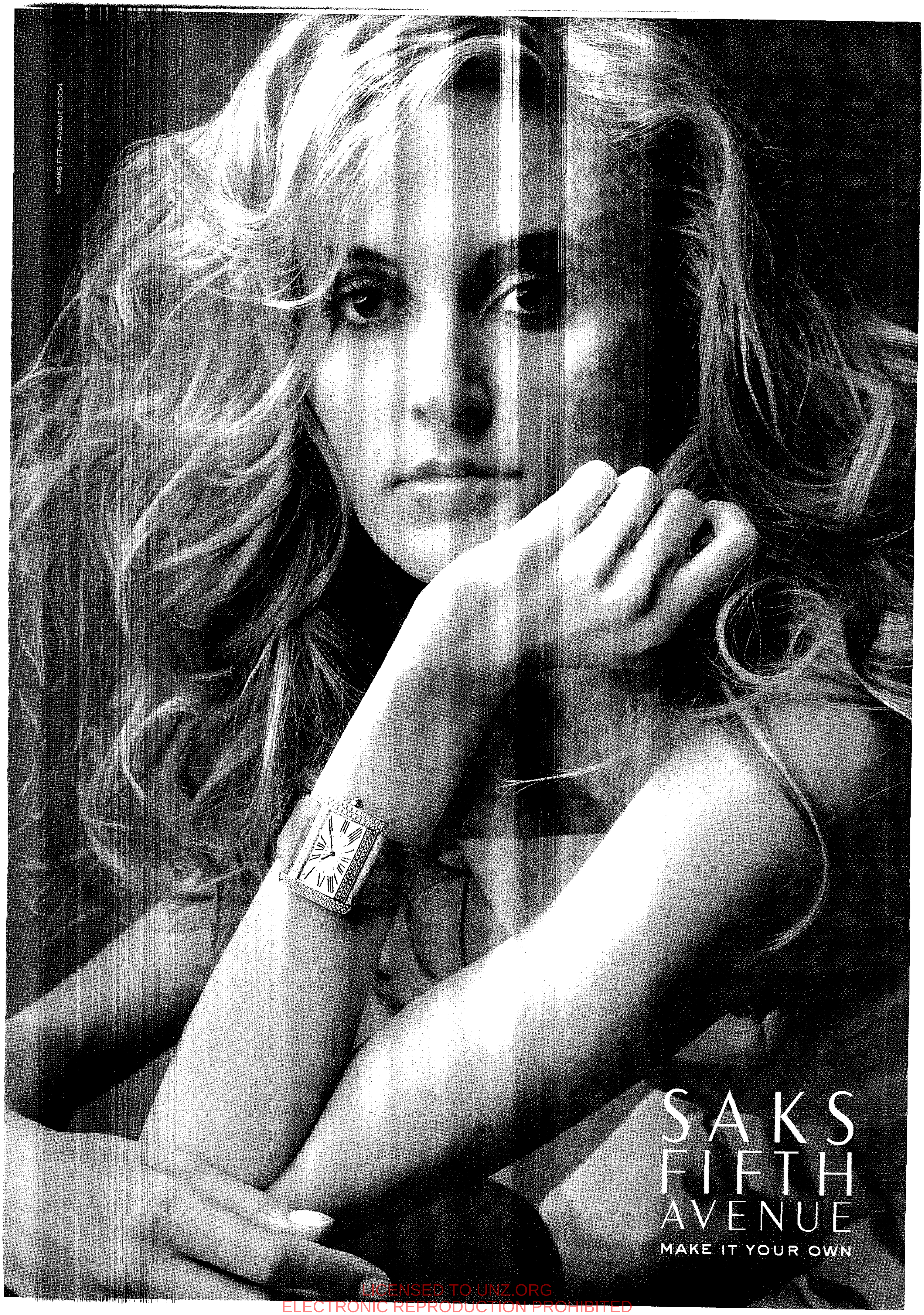
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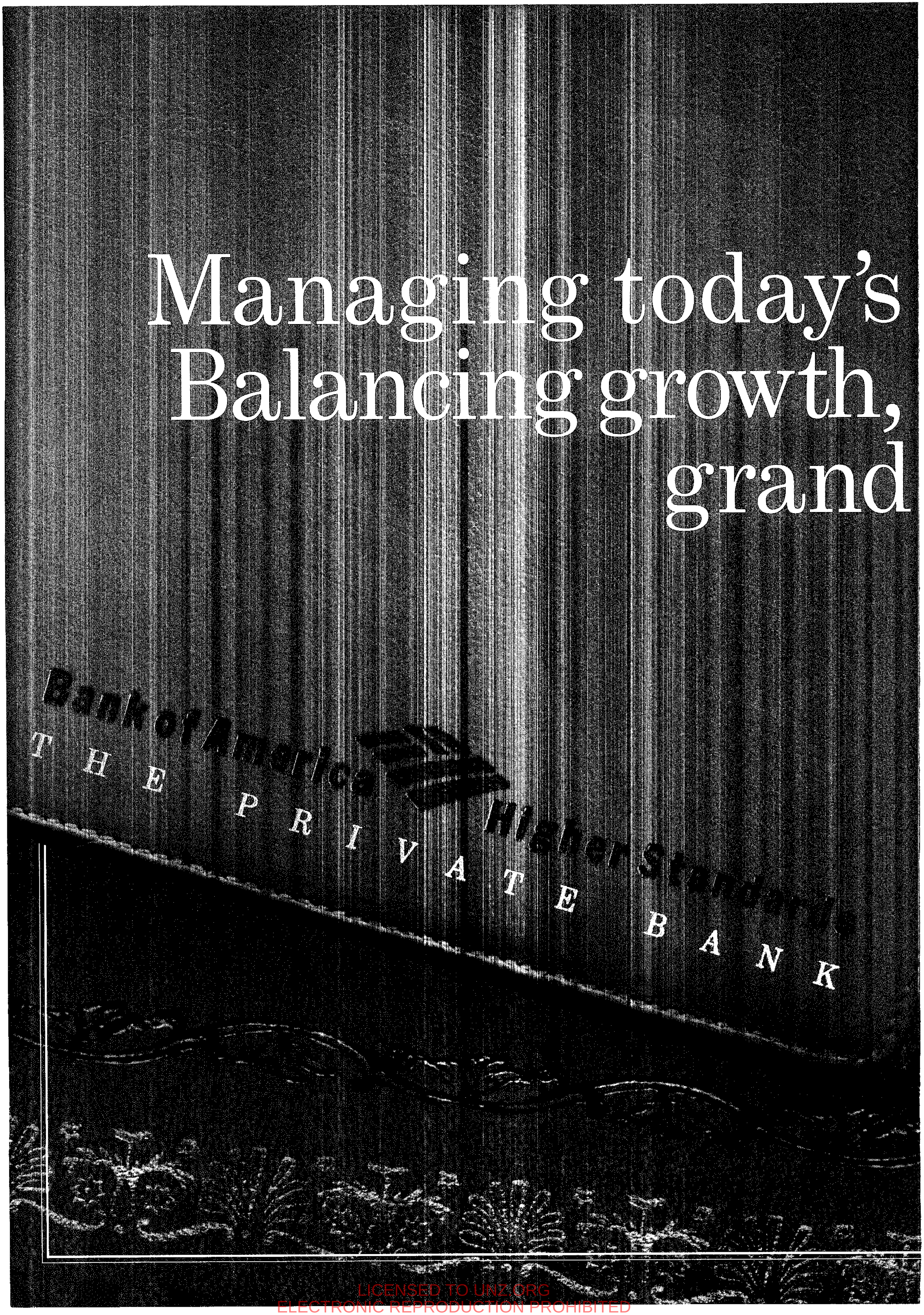
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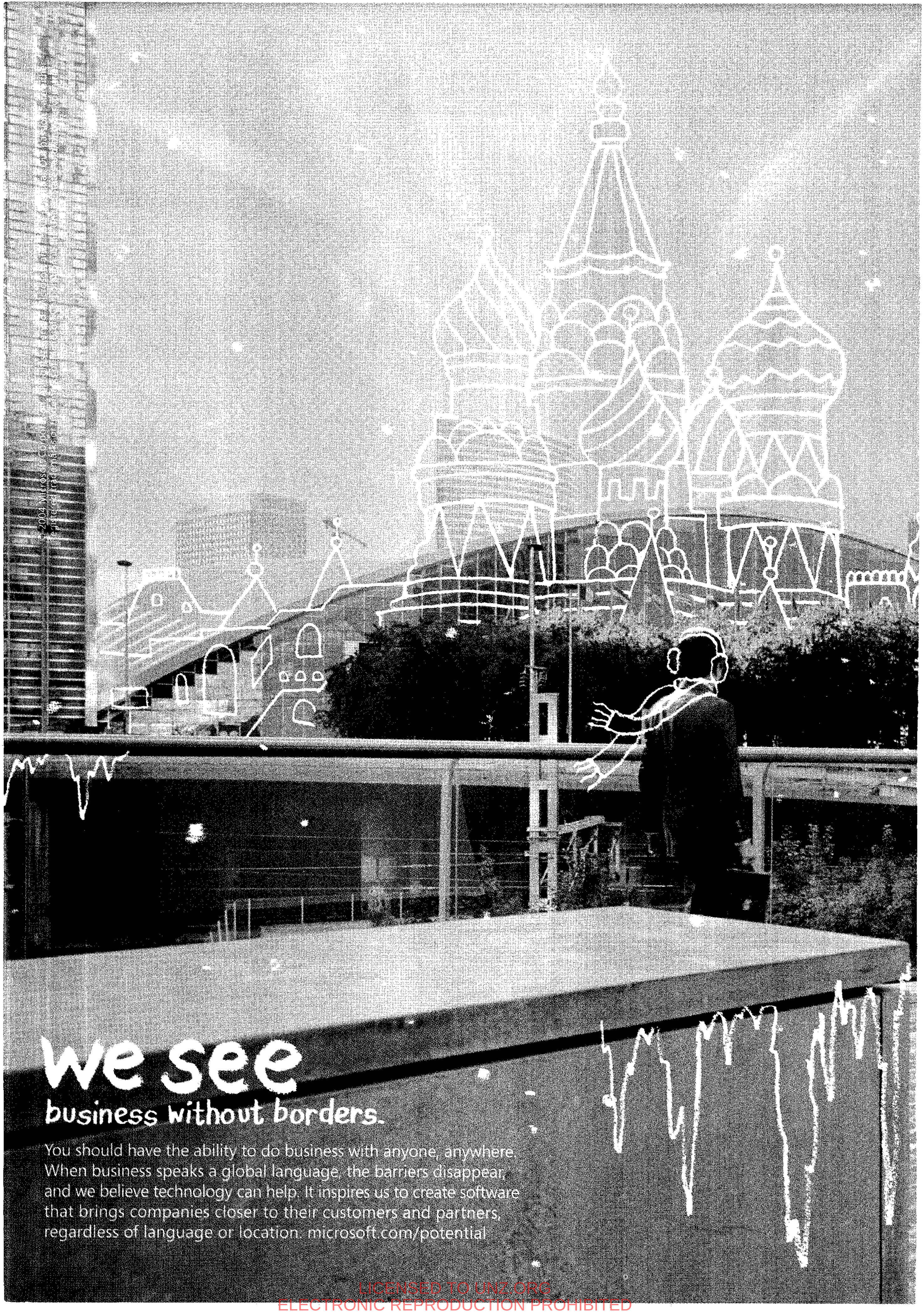

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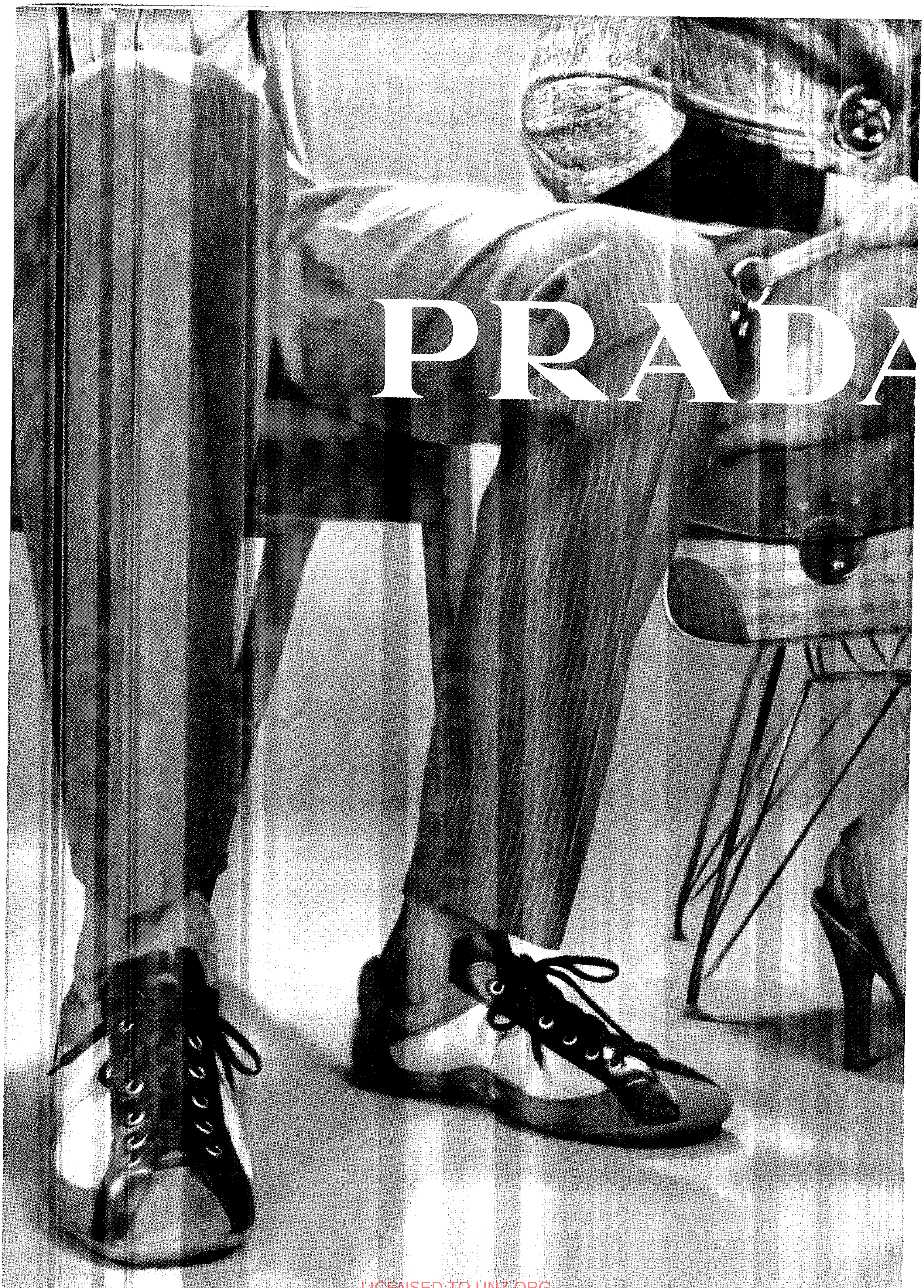
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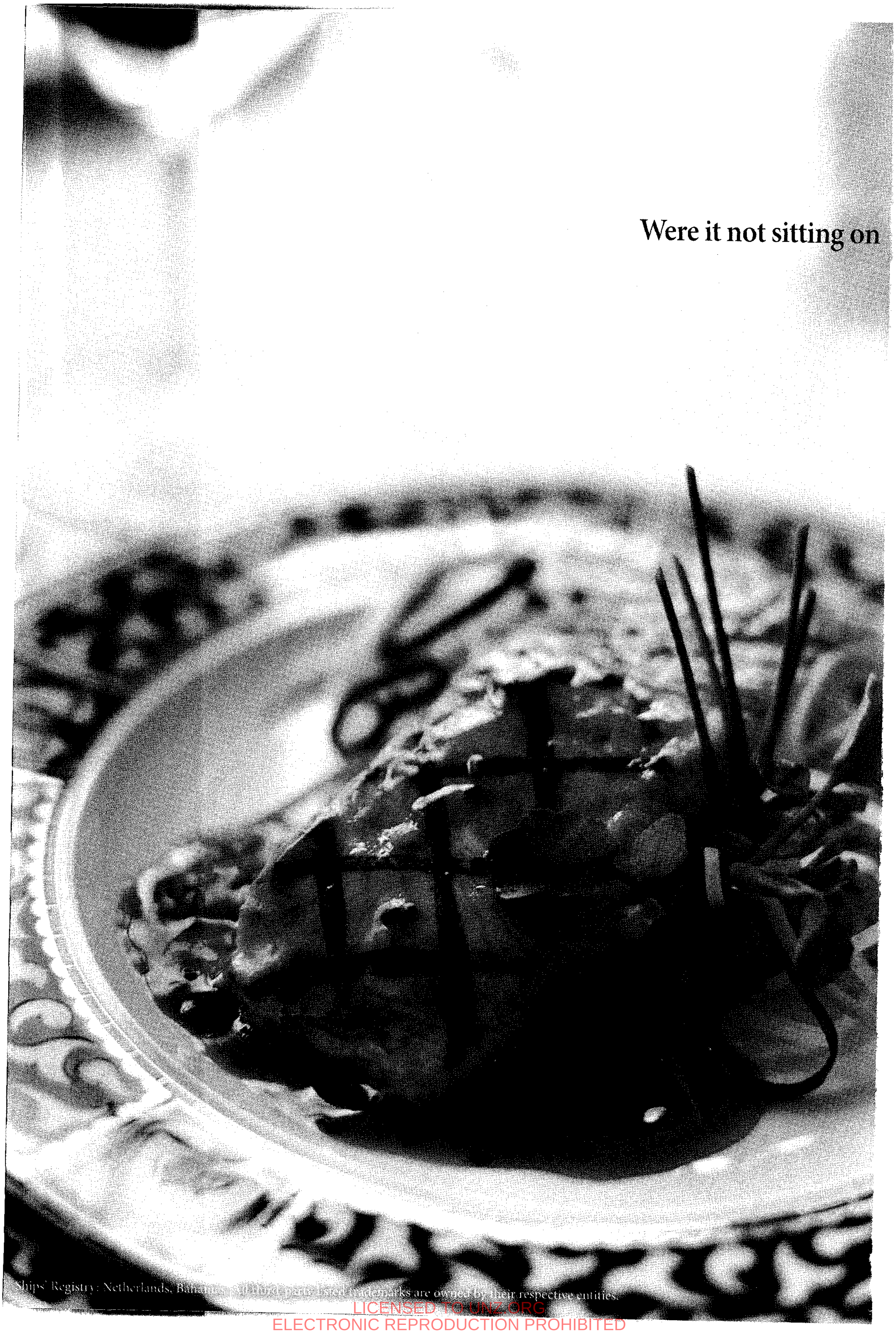

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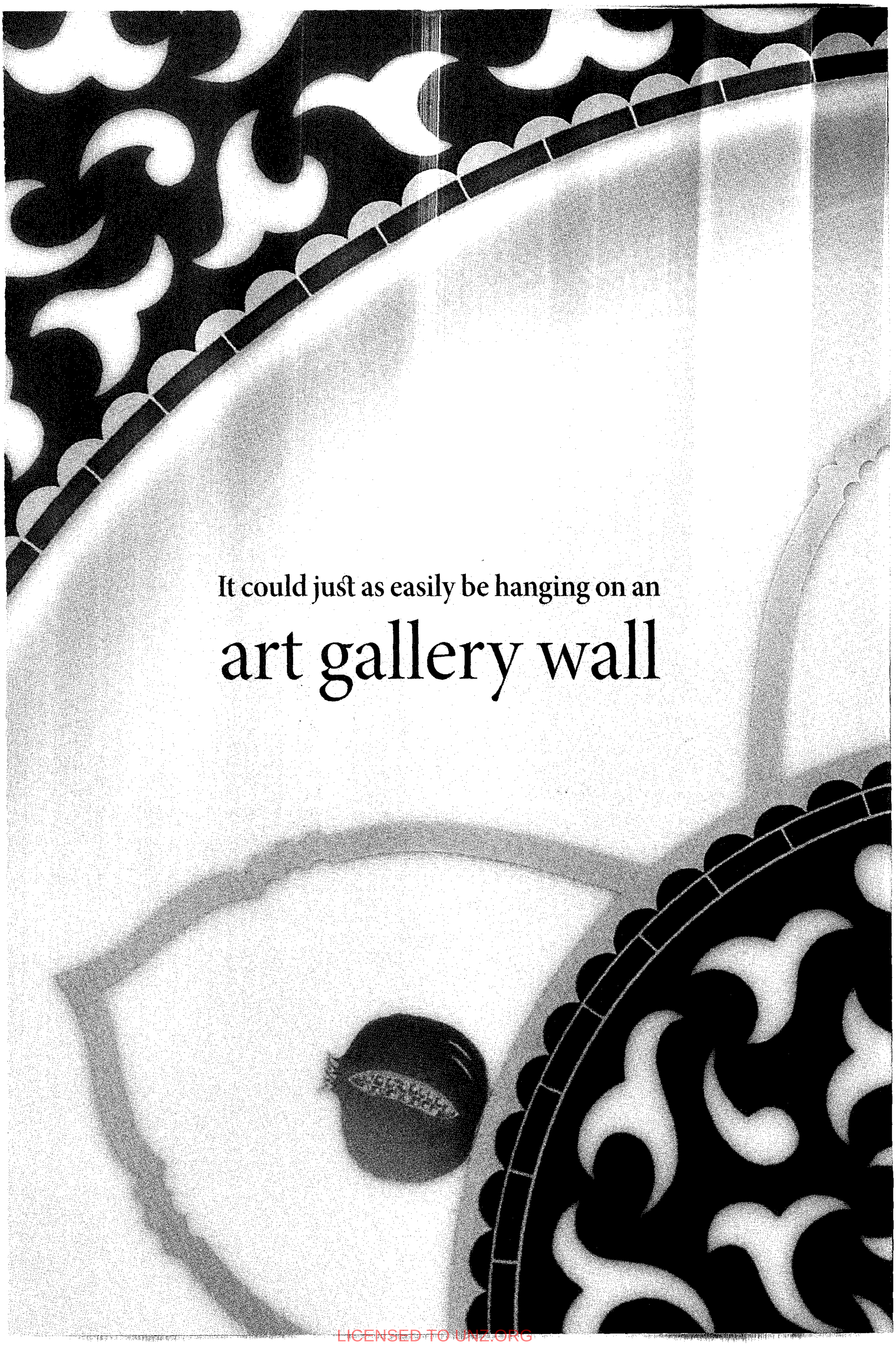

It could just as easily be hanging on an

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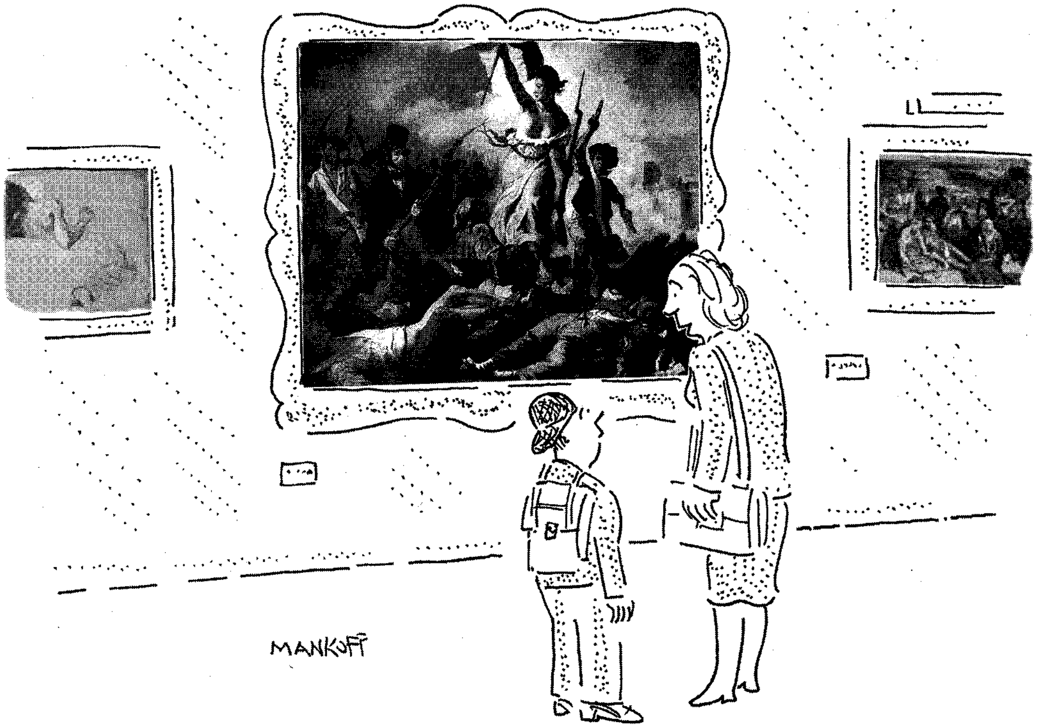
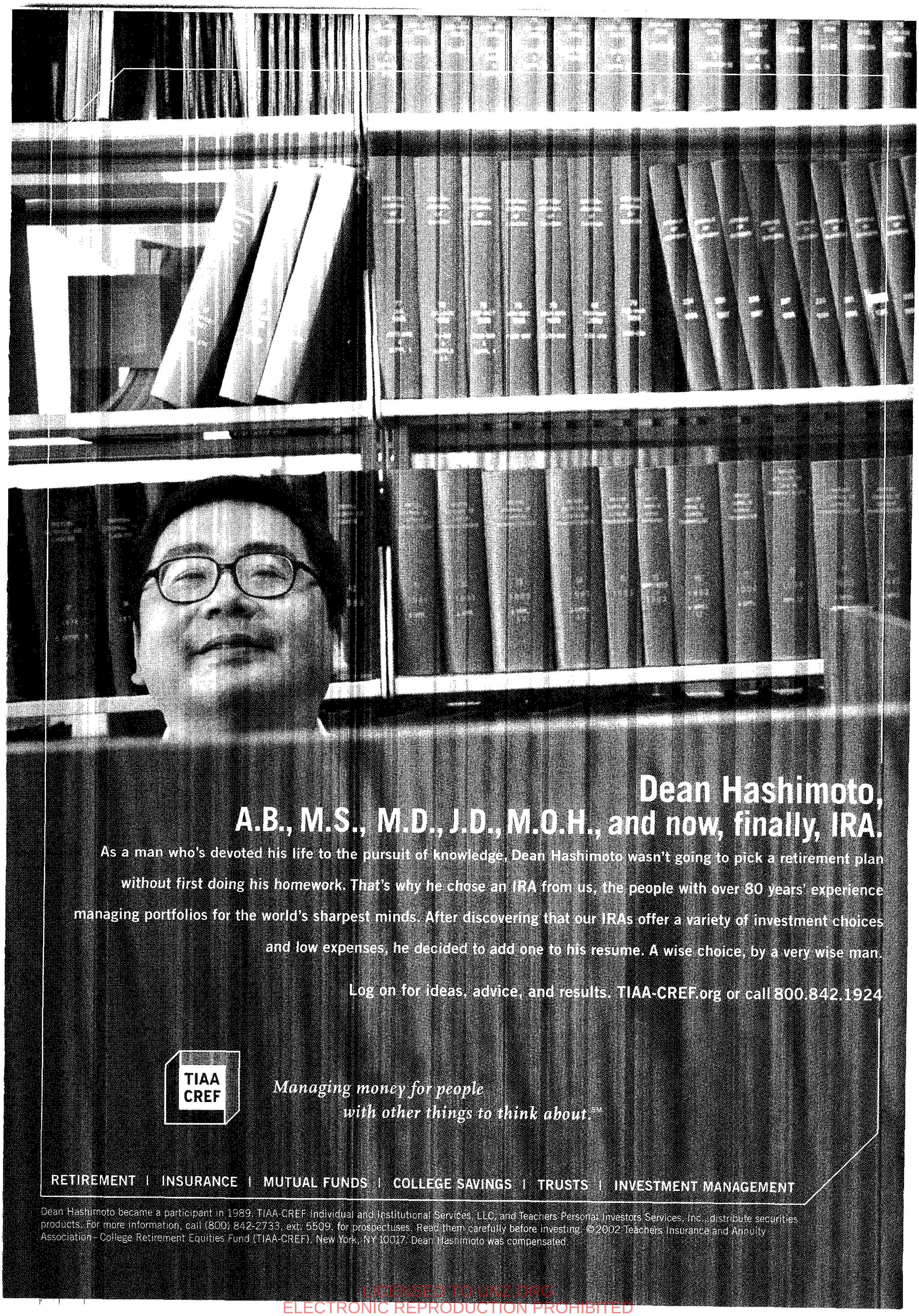


*"That's right, honey—it was a wardrobe malfunction."*



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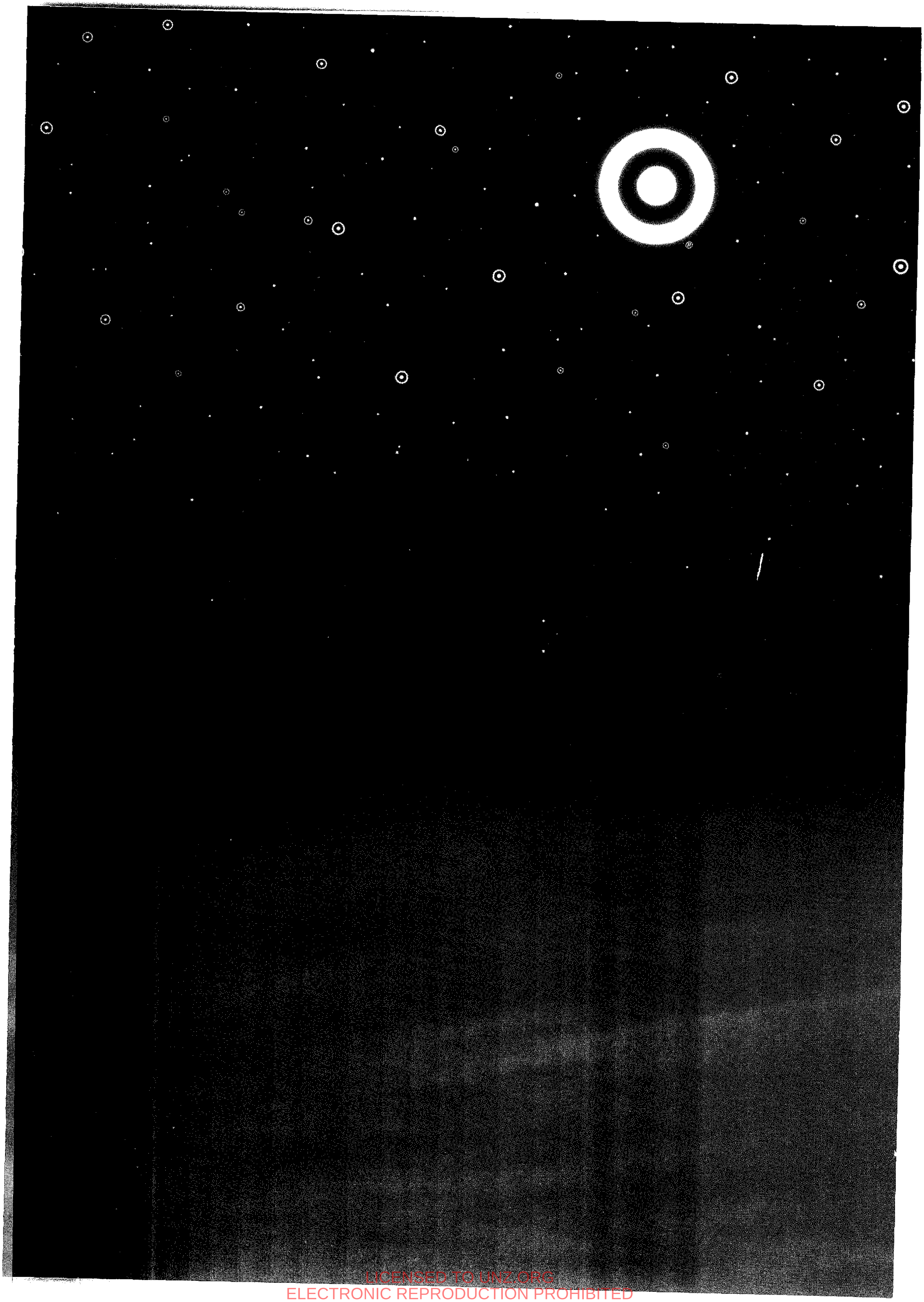

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# CONTRIBUTORS

Larissa MacFarquhar ("The Populist," p. 132) has been a staff writer since 1998.

David Sedaris ("The Living Dead," p. 74) has a collection of essays, "Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim," coming out in June.

Jane Mayer ("Contract Sport," p. 80) is a staff writer and the co-author of two books, "Strange Justice" and "Landslide."

Roger Angell ("La Vie en Rose," p. 92) has been a fiction editor at the magazine since 1956 and a contributor since 1944. He has written seven books about baseball, including "Game Time: A Baseball Companion."

Ian Frazier ("Route 3," p. 110) will publish a collection of pieces about New York City next year.

Peter Hessler ("Oracle Bones," p. 118) lives in Beijing. His book "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze," about his experience as a Peace Corps teacher in China, is available in paperback.

George Packer ("A Democratic World," p. 100) is a staff writer and the author of "The Village of Waiting" and "Blood of the Liberals." He is the editor of "The Fight Is for Democracy: Winning the War of Ideas in America and the World."

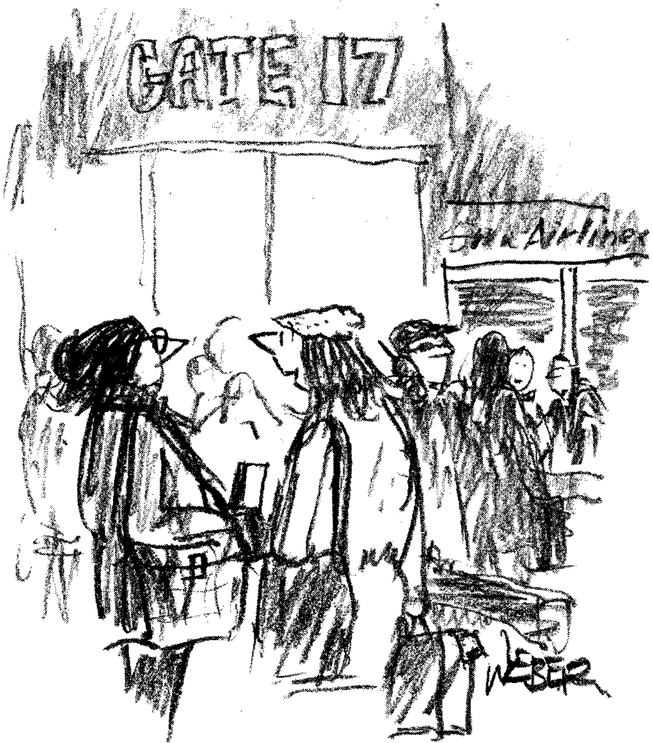
Alex Ross ("Listen to This," p. 146) writes about music for the magazine.

Paul Muldoon (Poem, p. 166) is the recipient of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his book "Moy Sand and Gravel."

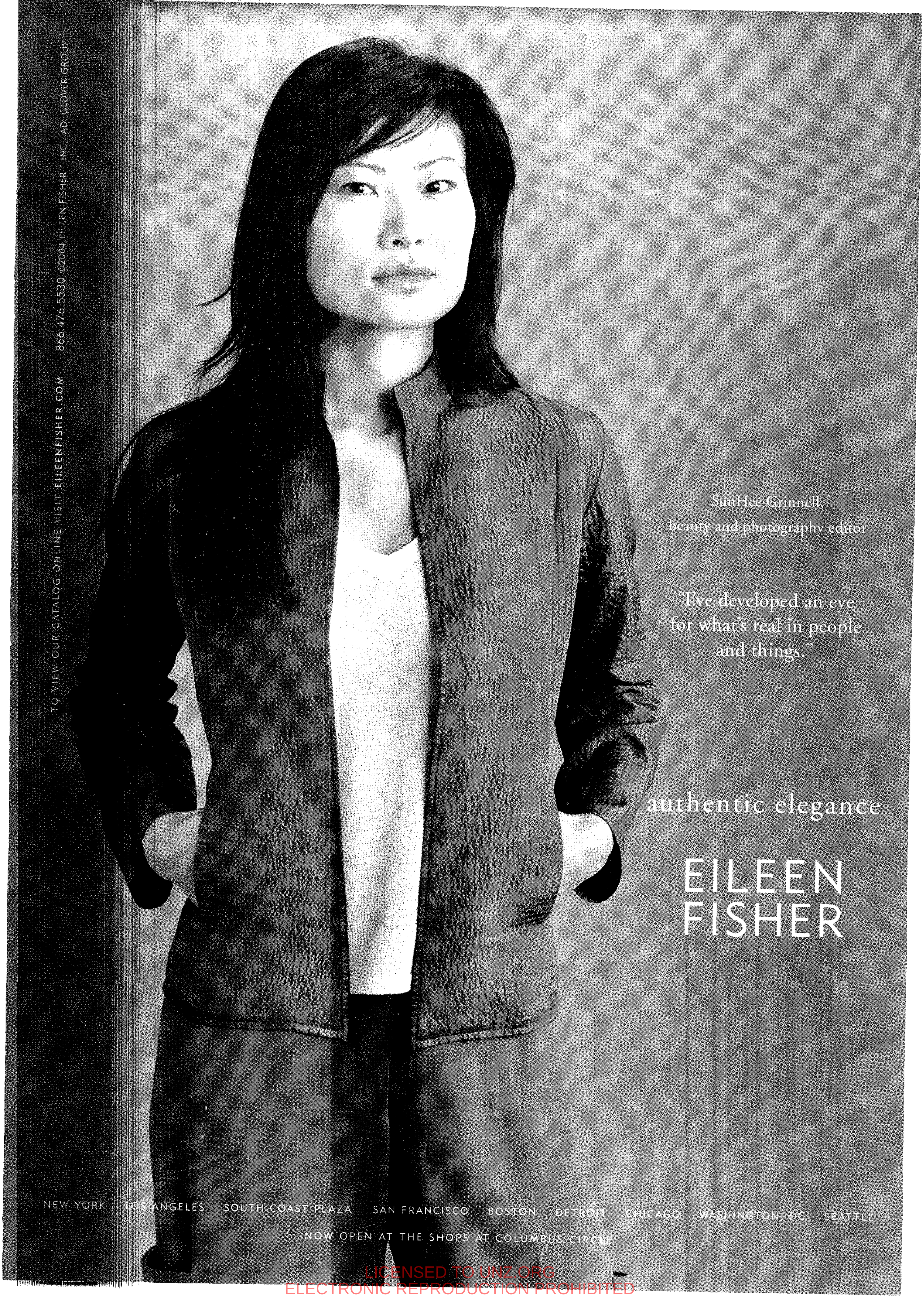
David Grann ("The Brand," p. 156) is a staff writer.

Chris Ware (Comic Strip, p. 172) is an artist and writer. His books include "Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth," "Quimby the Mouse," and "The Acme Novelty Datebook."

Andrea Lee (Fiction, p. 174) is the author of "Russian Journal," "Sarah Phillips," and "Interesting Women." She lives in Turin, Italy. ♦



*"The security screener said I have exquisite feet."*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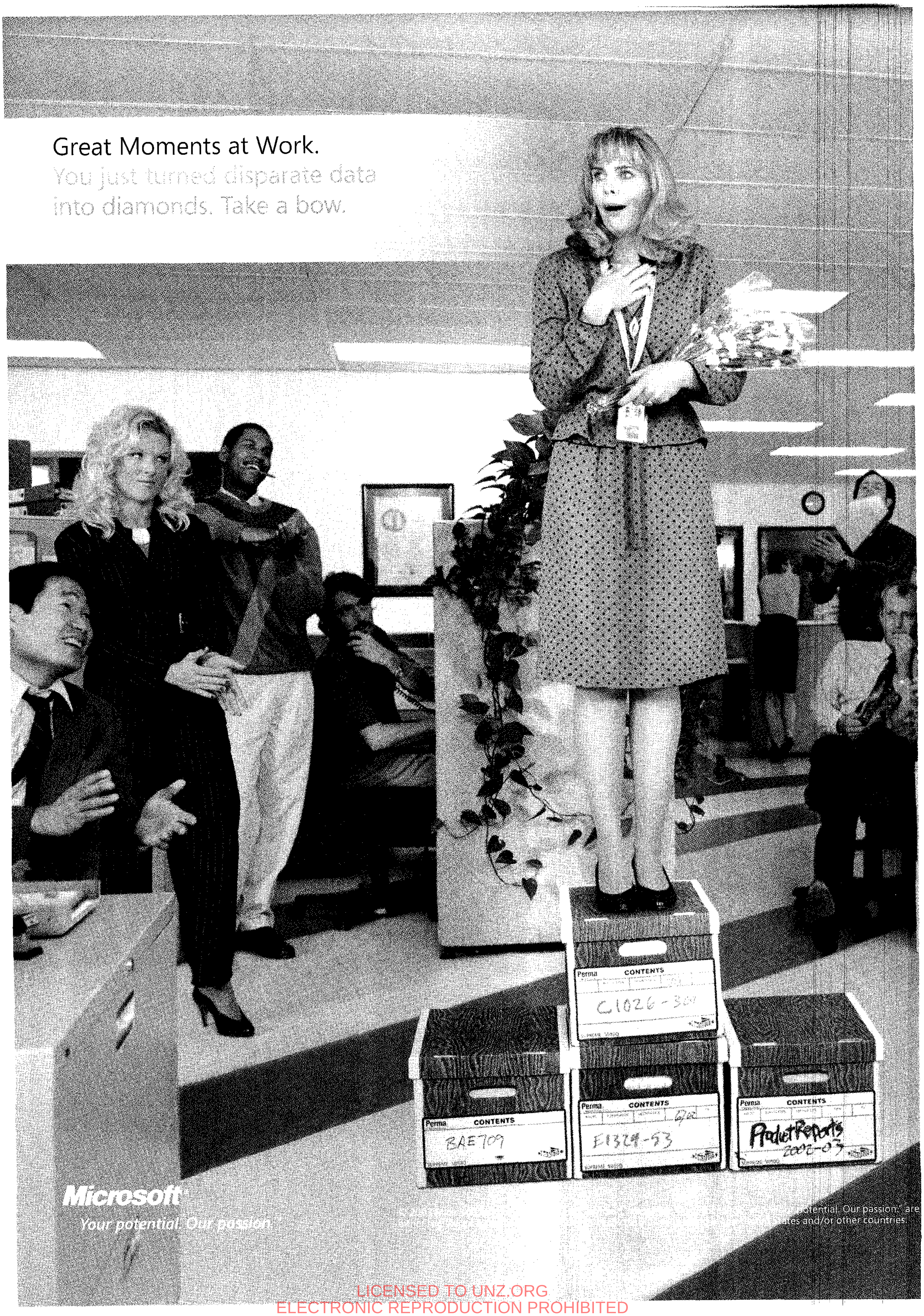
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## THE FALLEN

Hendrik Hertzberg lists several words—like "unemployment," "AIDS," and "the environment"—that were "missing in action" from President George Bush's State of the Union address (Comment, February 2nd). But most disturbing of all was Bush's failure to explicitly mention the deaths of American service members in the Iraqi conflict. Last week, the number reached five hundred and twenty-four, and continues to rise. A decent leader would have taken a moment in his speech to acknowledge how many of our troops had fallen, and to honor them.
*Lawrence Lader*
*New York City*

Hertzberg writes that the Republicans treated Max Cleland "ruthlessly" in the 2002 Senate election in Georgia. That is a great understatement. Comparing a man like Cleland, who lost three limbs as a soldier in Vietnam, to Hussein and bin Laden qualifies as exceptional viciousness—especially when you consider the service records of President Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney. It is also a sad commentary on the type of people who have come to dominate the Republican Party, and on what that Party has become.
*Bill Heineke*
*River Forest, Ill.*

## NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1968

Calvin Tomkins, in his story on Eugene McCarthy's view of the current Democratic field, writes that, in 1968, McCarthy's "surprise campaign for the Presidency swept four early primaries and precipitated Lyndon Johnson's decision to withdraw from the race" (The Talk of the Town, January 19th). McCarthy (just barely) lost the first contest, in New Hampshire, however—even though Johnson was not on the ballot, and all of his votes were write-ins. On March 31st, two days before the second primary, in Wisconsin, Johnson announced that he would not accept the nomination. McCarthy did go on to win several primaries, and his insurgent candidacy was, undeniably, a major factor in Johnson's withdrawal. But he didn't beat the President at the polls.
*Steven Morris*
*East Hampton, N.Y.*

## AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH

Jerome Groopman is right to argue that the attacks on the World Trade Center revealed shortcomings in the standard mental-health response to disasters ("The Grief Industry," January 26th). That is part of why the September 11th Fund has supported additional training for mental-health professionals treating patients affected by the attacks. But, when Groopman writes that early predictions of an avalanche of trauma reactions have not been borne out, he frames the issue in an unduly narrow way. The legacy of the attacks goes beyond post-traumatic stress disorder. In our work with the American Red Cross, we screened more than thirteen thousand people affected by September 11th. We found a full spectrum of psychological consequences, from transient reactions to more serious, unremitting disorders. For many, September 11th led to the loss of a job or a residence, depression, substance abuse, or relationship problems. We need to recognize that disasters like September 11th have ripple effects, and that the psychological aftermath affects us in broad, insidious, and pervasive ways—as the perpetrators no doubt intended.
*Gerald McCleery*
*Director, September 11th Fund*
*Mental Health Benefit Program*
*New York City*

CORRECTION: The credit for the February 9th cover, "Code Red," was misspelled. The artist is David Macaulay.

•

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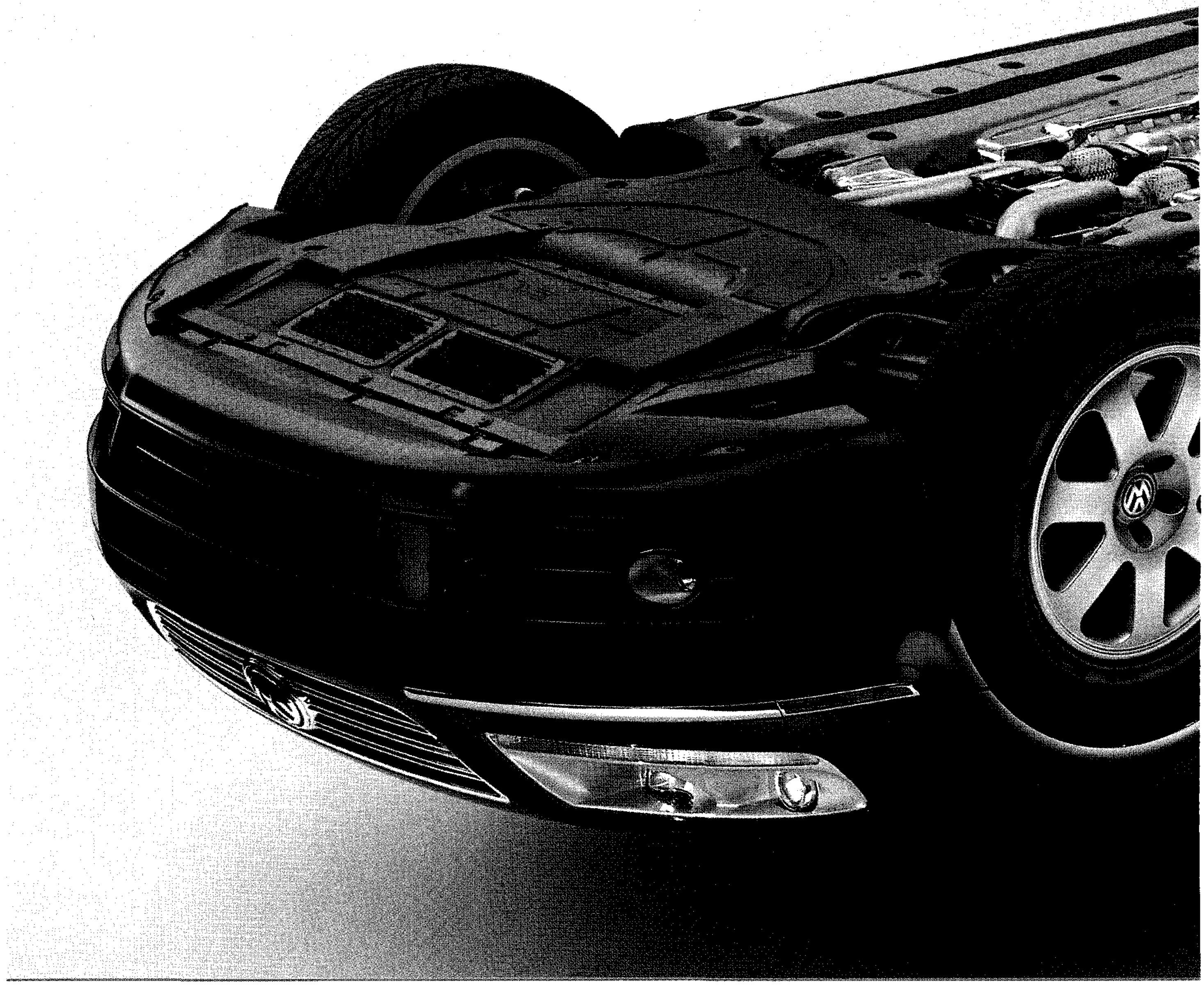

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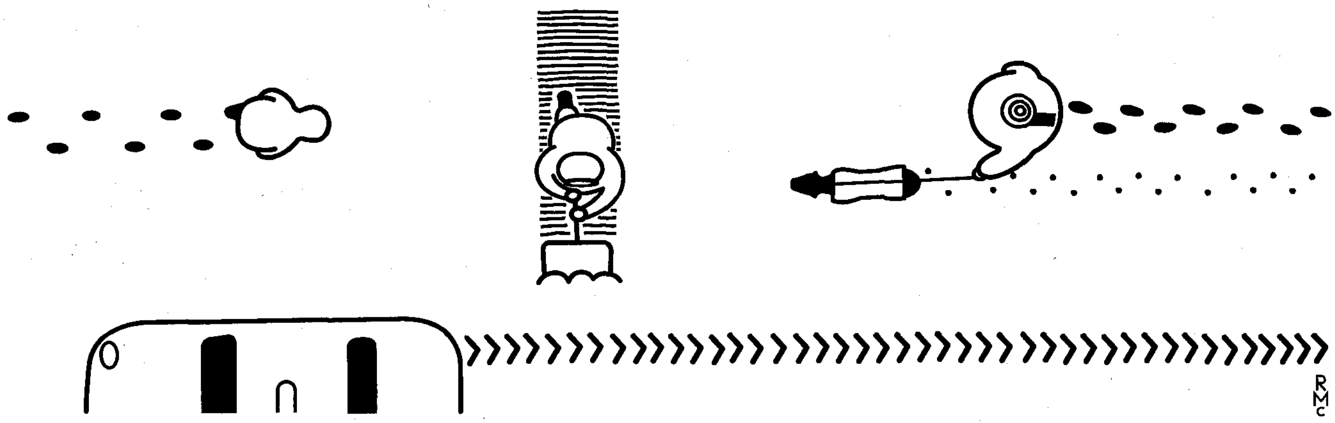

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*For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.*

## THIS WEEK

### ALL IN ONE

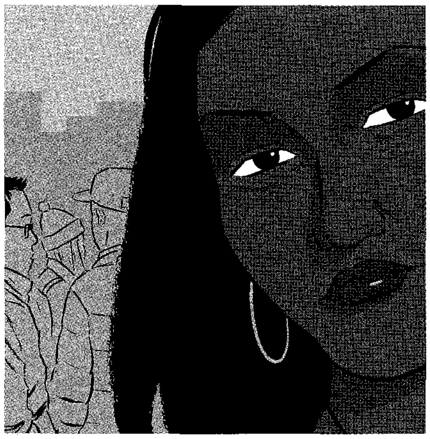
With little more than a head scarf and a pair of glasses as props, Sarah Jones can transform herself from an Indian aid worker to a Jewish grandmother to a tough-talking street kid. Jones's solo show "Surface Transit," which premièred in 1998 at the Nuyorican Poets Café, won the admiration of Meryl Streep, and her new show, "Bridge & Tunnel," is co-produced by Streep with the Culture Project. Jones follows the fine tradition of multicharacter monologuists such as Lily Tomlin, Eric Bogosian, and Whoopi Goldberg, channelling more than a dozen urban characters and mixing a generous dose of politics into her comedy. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, opens Feb. 19; see Theatre.)

### RHYTHM NATION

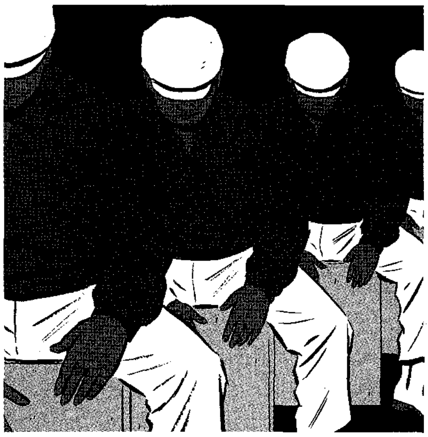
Slaves in colonial Peru, prohibited from playing drums, turned crates into percussion instruments, thus creating the *cajón,* or box drum. Some Peruvian musical ensembles employ only one *cajón;* Perú Negro, the thirty-year-old Lima-based music-and-dance group that sparked the Afro-Peruvian revival of the seventies, uses several. The polyrhythmic arrangement was the brainchild of the group's founder, Ronaldo Campos, who died in 2001. Ronaldo's son Rony has taken over the reins, and this week he brings Perú Negro to New York for the first time. (Town Hall, Feb. 21; see Night Life.)

### MR. PERSONALITY

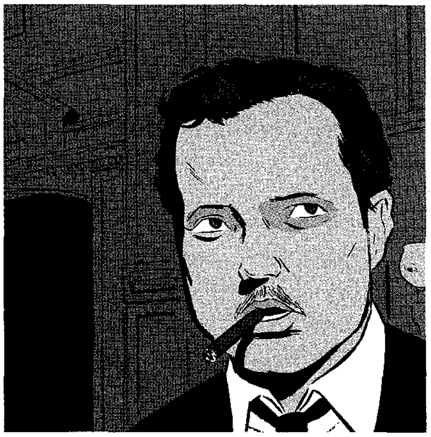
Orson Welles conquered the film world while still in his twenties and then slowly dissolved into self-parody. The eight-week Welles retrospective at Film Forum, which begins with "The Magnificent Ambersons," will show new prints of several films, including "F for Fake." There will also be plenty of rarities for Welles aficionados: his adaptation of "Macbeth" (with restored Scottish brogue) and his celebrated appearance on "I Love Lucy," as a magician who performs at Ricky's club. (Film Forum, starts Feb. 20; see Movies.)



*Sarah Jones in a one-woman show at 45 Bleecker Street Theatre.*



*The music and dance of Perú Negro (and their drums) at Town Hall.*



ADRIAN TOMINE

*An Orson Welles retrospective, currently at Film Forum.*

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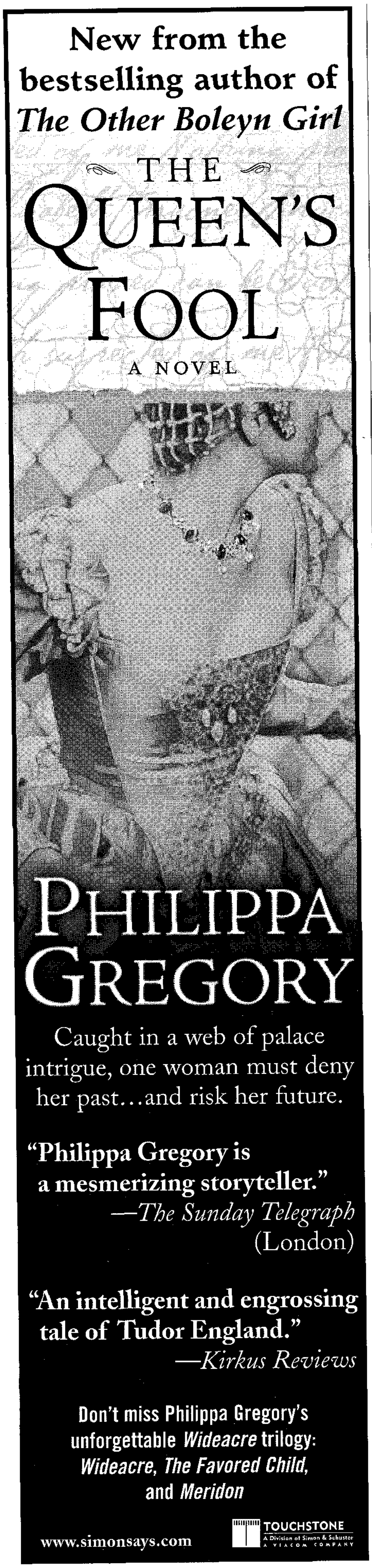

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Olympia Dukakis and her husband, Louis Zorich, play Clytemnestra and Agamemnon in the Aquila Theatre Company's production of Aeschylus' tragedy, in a new translation by Peter Meineck. Directed by Meineck and Robert Richmond. In previews. Opens Feb. 12 at 8. (John Jay, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-239-6200.)

**BEAUTIFUL CHILD**
The Vineyard presents a new play by Nicky Silver, who wrote "Pterodactyls." This one is about a man who returns to the parental nest. George Grizzard and Penny Fuller lead the cast. Terry Kinney directs. In previews. Opens Feb. 24 at 7. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

**BIG BILL**
A. R. Gurney's new play tracks the rise and fall of Bill Tilden, the tennis superstar who won seven U.S. championships in the nineteen-twenties. Directed by Mark Lamos, with John Michael Higgins as Tilden. In previews. Opens Feb. 22 at 6:45. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

**BRIDGE & TUNNEL**
A new one-woman show by Sarah Jones. See This Week. In previews. Opens Feb. 19 at 7. Directed by Tony Taccone. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

**CAN-CAN**
The City Center "Encores!" season opens with a revival of the musical by Cole Porter and Abe Burrows, starring Patti LuPone. Directed by Lonny Price. Feb. 12-15. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

**COOKIN'**
The slapstick, "Iron Chef"-gone-haywire comedy from Seoul comes to the Minetta Lane Theatre for an open run after a successful season at the New Victory. Conceived and directed by Seung Whan Song. (18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-420-8000.)

**DOUBLE INFIDELITY**
Marivaux's romantic farce about a country girl, a commoner, a prince, and a palace beauty is staged at the Pearl. Directed by Beatrice Terry. Previews begin Feb. 14. Opens Feb. 22 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

**DROWNING CROW**
Marion McClinton directs a Manhattan Theatre Club production of a new play by Regina Taylor ("Crowns") about the reunion of a family of African-American artists. Alfre Woodard leads the cast. In previews. Opens Feb. 19 at 6:45. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

**EMBEDDED**
In Tim Robbins's new satire at the Public, a conflict in the Middle East provokes both media frenzy and front-line folly. A production of the Actors' Gang. Previews begin Feb. 24. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

**FIDDLER ON THE ROOF**
Alfred Molina is Tevye, Randy Graff is Golde, and Barbara Barrie is Yente in a new Broadway production of the musical, directed by David Leveaux. In previews. (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

**KING LEAR**
Christopher Plummer is Lear in a Lincoln Center Theatre production, directed by Jonathan Miller. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont. 212-239-6200.)

**MAGIC HANDS FREDDY**
Ralph Macchio ("The Karate Kid") and Michael Rispoli (Jackie Aprile in "The Sopranos") star in a new play by Arje Shaw about a masseur and his brother. Directed by Rebecca Taylor. In previews. Opens Feb. 19 at 7. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.)

**PERICLES**
A new production of Shakespeare's drama, directed by Bartlett Sher for Theatre for a New Audience. Feb. 12-28. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

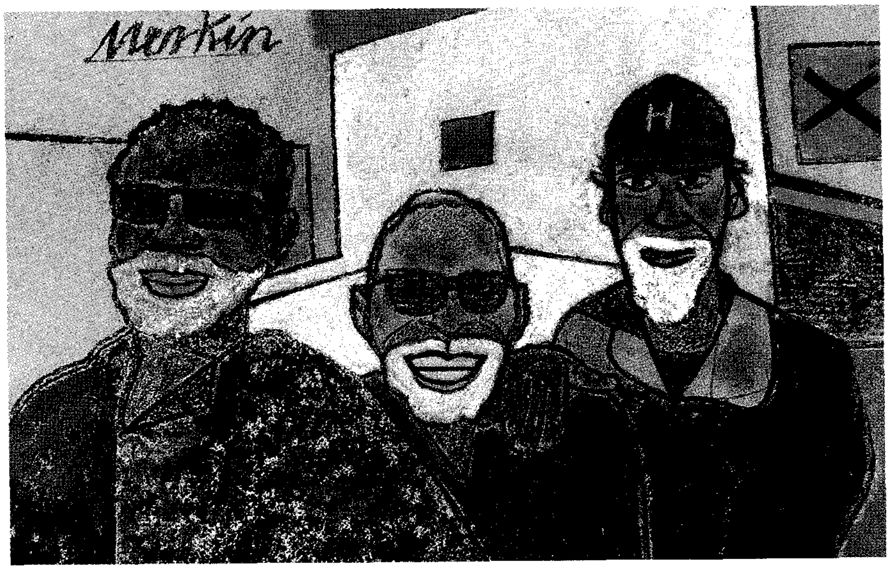
**POOR THEATER**
The Wooster Group performs a work in progress. Feb. 19-March 27. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 212-966-3651.)

**THE ROARING GIRLE**
Alice Tuan's new play is an adaptation of a Jacobean drama about the London grifter Moll Cutpurse. Directed by Melanie Joseph, for the Foundry Theatre. Previews begin Feb. 20. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-868-4444.)

**ROULETTE**
The filmmaker Paul Weitz ("American Pie," "About a Boy") is also a playwright. Anna Paquin, Larry Bryggman, Ana Gasteyer, and Shawn Hatosy star in his dark comedy about a suburban father eager to spice up his life. An Ensemble Studio Theatre production. Directed by Trip Cullman. In previews. Opens Feb. 15 at 7. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

**SEA OF TRANQUILITY**
The Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new play by Howard Korder, about a Connecticut family who move to New Mexico and find it less relaxing than they had hoped. Directed by Neil Pepe. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

**SMALL TRAGEDY**
In a new play by Craig Lucas ("Prelude to a Kiss"), presented by Playwrights Horizons, a small-town production of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" is un-



*The Holmes Brothers bring their blend of gospel, rock, and soul to Joe's Pub.*

RICHARD MERKIN

dermined by infighting and intrigue among the cast. Directed by Mark Wing-Davey. Previews begin Feb. 17. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

**THE STENDHAL SYNDROME**
Primary Stages presents two short new plays by Terrence McNally: "Full Frontal Nudity," about tourists in Florence, and "Prelude and Liebestod," about an orchestra conductor in crisis. Richard Thomas and Isabella Rossellini (making her New York stage début) lead the cast. Directed by Leonard Foglia. In previews. Opens Feb. 16. (59E59 Theatre, 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

**WINTERTIME**
Marsha Mason stars in a Second Stage production of a new romantic comedy by Charles L. Mee. Directed by David Schweizer. In previews. Opens Feb. 23 at 6:30. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

## OPENED RECENTLY

**AUNT DAN AND LEMON**
In the New Group's revival of Wallace Shawn's haunting and transcendent 1985 play, Lili Taylor plays Leonora, or Lemon, a woman who cultivates the garden of her memory in flashbacks dominated by a loquacious family friend she calls Aunt Dan (Kristen Johnston). Aunt Dan argues for the human face of fascism and reveals her desire for Henry Kissinger—whom she regards as one of the most eligible bachelors in the world (the political context is the nineteen-seventies). Just as Aunt Dan yearns to be overwhelmed by force—a male force—Lemon secretly desires to be overwhelmed by Aunt Dan. Directed by Scott Elliott. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/5/04.) (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

**BOOBS: THE MUSICAL**
The Arkansan chanteuse Gennifer Flowers has joined the cast of this goofy revue of the ribald, Eisenhower-era songs of Ruth Wallis—which includes the ballad "Bill." Directed by Donna Drake. (Dillon's, 245 W. 54th St. 212-307-4100.)

**DOÑA ROSITA THE SPINSTER**
In 1935, Federico García Lorca used the story of a mutable rose—which changes over the course of a single day from deep crimson to white to a withered husk—as the basis for the title character of this play: a woman who fades over the decades as she remains loyal to her absent fiancé. In Ernest Johns's production at the Cocteau Repertory, Amanda Jones makes a delicate Doña Rosita, and the vibrant supporting cast keeps the drama from feeling too heavy. (Bowerie Lane, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-677-0060.)

**EDEN**
Eugene O'Brien's new play about the marital woes of a middle-class Irish couple is constructed as a series of monologues by the husband and the wife. The actors, Ciarán O'Reilly and Catherine Byrne, convey humor, self-sabotage, and tragedy. Directed by John Tillinger. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

**FIVE FLIGHTS**
Adam Bock's new comedy takes on the role of religion in society, the transformative power of love and faith, and the unexpected congruence of ice hockey and Russian ballet. With fine performances (most notably by Joanna P. Adler) from a cast of six. Directed by Kent Nicholson. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Closes Feb. 22.)

**THE FLU SEASON**
The Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company presents the American première of a new comic play by Will Eno. Directed by Hal Brooks. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444.)

**THE LADIES**
Anne Washburn's play about the notorious First Ladies Elena Ceausescu, Imelda Marcos, Eva Perón, and Madame Mao was acclaimed in workshop performances last year. A production of the Civilians theatre company, in association with Dixon Place. Directed by Anne Kauffman. (Chashama, 111 W. 42nd St. 212-219-0736.)

**MAX MORATH: RAGTIME AND AGAIN**
The pianist, singer, and raconteur presents a musical history of ragtime. In previews. Directed by Robert Marks. (York Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

## TABLES FOR TWO

**DINER**
85 Broadway, at Berry St., Brooklyn (718-486-3077)—A dining car, made in 1927 by the Kullman company of New Jersey to resemble the better-known Pullman model and never intended for the rails, has been parked on this corner since the nineteen-forties. Five years ago, when a former Odeon bartender bought it with a partner, it became the late-night burger-eating capital of Williamsburg. Outside, on a makeshift patio (lovely for brunch in the summer), overturned furniture gives the place an abandoned air; inside, the scant light makes for a pleasantly seedy sodium glow. One recent freezing night, it was possible to squeeze in at the counter between two fellows who might have been regulars—one wearing a T-shirt advertising the Village People's 1979 spring tour and the other in a snug navy V neck and school tie. A hot toddy for thawing out was ready in a jiff—the bartender whisked it off to the kitchen and shook in a few cloves from an industrial-size cannister.

The menu is winsomely basic and set in a blotchy typewriter font—Soup, Burger, Veg. Plate, 1/2 chicken, Ribeye with f. fries. For diners sitting in one of the little booths, a waitress came to write down specials on the paper tablecloth: escarole salad, a whole dorade, lamb shank with fregola pasta ("round, like couscous," she said, and drew a little "O"). The chef, Caroline Fidanza, likes things sharp and tangy and on the Mediterranean side. A watercress salad comes with orange slices, feta, and scarlet-tinted pickled onions in a sherry-wine vinaigrette; the dorade is stuffed with lemon slices and sachets of rosemary and thyme; earthy button mushrooms have a hint of white wine.

Ten-thirty is the witching hour, or maybe that's when band practice gets out. Suddenly there was an unnavigable crowd packed into the narrow restaurant. The windows turned opaque with steam. The tiles—all original—shone. Three guys with inky shags sat at the bar, drinking coffee and rubbing their eyes awake. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $8.50-$17.50.)

—*Dana Goodyear*

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**MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN**
Gwendolyn Mulamba ("The Blacks: A Clown Show") leads the cast in the Classical Theatre of Harlem's production of the Bertolt Brecht play. Directed by Christopher McElroen. (H.S.A. Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444. Through Feb. 29.)

**THE MYSTERIES**
Biblical tales (of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood, etc.) drawn from the writings of Dario Fo, Mikhail Bulgakov, Tony Harrison, and others are presented with maximum impact by the director Brian Kulick. After Cain slays Abel, a large eye rises to illuminate his crime; later, Christ's crucifixion among a number of drunken gamblers evokes Scorsese and Tarantino. Bill Buell leads the strong cast. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 212-677-4210. Closes Feb. 15.)

**THE ORWELL PROJECT**
Two productions based on books by George Orwell play in repertory at the Connelly Theatre: Peter Hall's musical adaptation of "Animal Farm," directed by David Travis, and Alan Lyddiard's multimedia version of "1984," directed by Ginevra Bull. Presented by Synapse Productions. (220 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444. Through March 7.)

**THE PARROT**
Six Obie winners—the writer and director Paul Zimet, the composer Ellen Maddow, the choreographer Karinne Keithley, the set designer Nic Ularu, the costume designer Kiki Smith, and the key-

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boardist "Blue" Gene Tyranny—have created a new musical for adults and children, inspired by an Italian folktale. Presented by the Talking Band and the Flea Theatre. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

**SHIRTWAIST, A MUSICAL GHOST STORY**
A new musical explores the aftermath of the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire, in 1911. Written by Ellen K. Anderson, with music by Ryan Brown. Directed by Heather Ondersma. (Tenement Theatre, 97 Orchard St. 800-965-4827. Through Feb. 16.)

**SUITCASE; OR, THOSE THAT RESEMBLE FLIES FROM A DISTANCE**
Louisa Thompson's cunningly constructed set holds two study lofts that rise above the stage, each containing a procrastinating, self-pitying female grad student. As the two women chat with each other on the phone, their boyfriends sulk on the stage below, trying in vain to gain access to their apartments and to their hearts. Why they would want in is unclear. Melissa James Gibson's script is often witty, and Colleen Werthmann and Christina Kirk, as the grad students, are sharp comic presences, but the scenario is more frustrating than funny. Directed by Daniel Aukin. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-868-4444. Through Feb. 28.)

**THEY WROTE THAT?**
For forty years, the married New York songwriters Barry Mann (the composer) and Cynthia Weil (the lyricist) have written hit after hit: "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'," "On Broadway," "We Gotta Get Out of This Place," "Sometimes When We Touch," etc. In this show, Mann plays the piano and sings while Weil narrates the story of their career and their marriage. An excellent five-man band, a stellar backup trio, and Mann and Weil's unpretentious affection for the material prevents the evening from becoming a staged "Behind the Music" episode. (McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

**VALHALLA**
New York Theatre Workshop presents a new play by Paul Rudnick that contrasts the lives and passions of the Wagner-loving Mad King Ludwig II of Bavaria and a precocious teen-ager in Texas in the nineteen-forties. Directed by Christopher Ashley. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

**WONDERFUL TOWN**
The musical from 1953, about two spirited Ohio sisters' adventures in Greenwich Village, gets a buoyant, beautifully staged revival that gives us back a thrilling glimpse of the gaiety, wit, confidence, and craft of the American musical in its populist heyday. The show boasts a well-played, fizzy Leonard Bernstein score and a terrific set of Comden and Green lyrics that stop the show several times, with a special huzzah for "One Hundred Easy Ways (to Lose a Man)." The excellent cast is superbly directed and choreographed by Kathleen Marshall. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

## ALSO PLAYING

**AIDA**
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

**ANNA IN THE TROPICS**
Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

**AVENUE Q**
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

**THE BOY FROM OZ**
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

**CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF**
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

**CHICAGO**
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

**GOLDA'S BALCONY**
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

**GOLF: THE MUSICAL**
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

**GYPSY**
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Feb. 28.)

**HAIRSPRAY**
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

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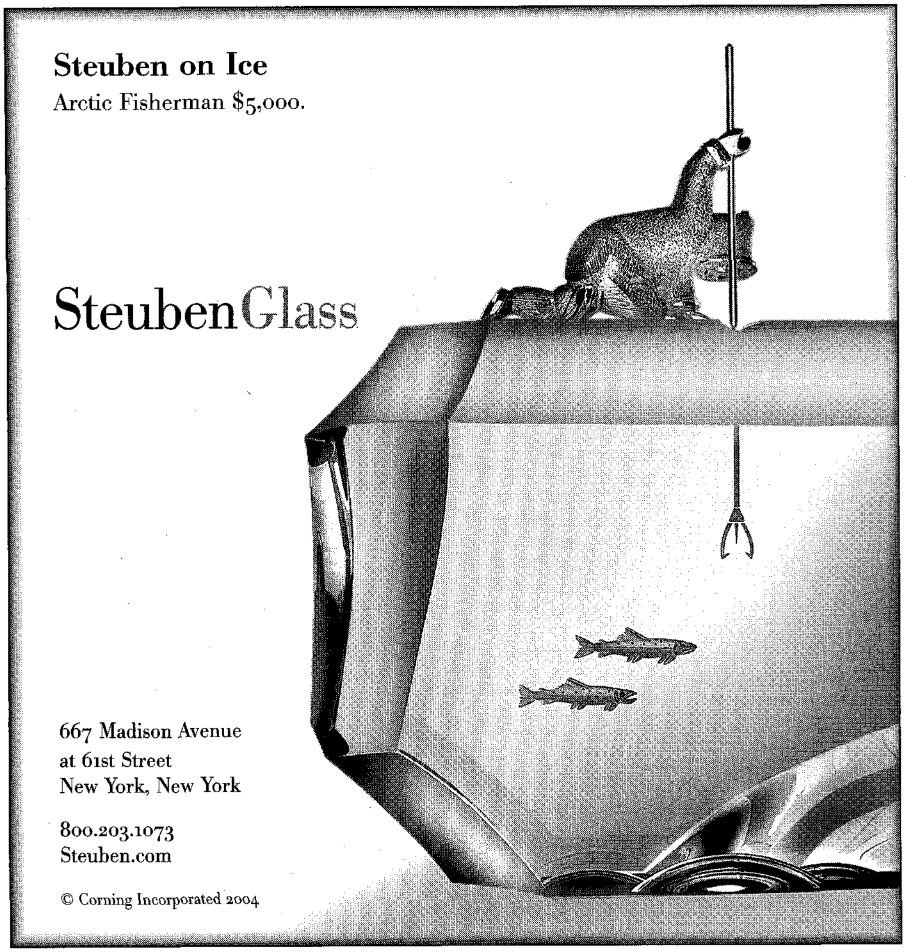

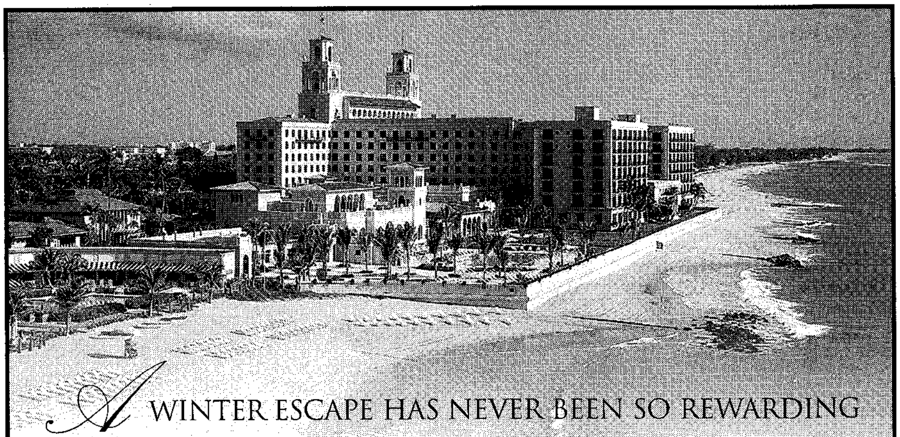

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Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.
**MAMMA MIA!**
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
**MERCURY: THE AFTERLIFE AND TIMES OF A ROCK GOD**
Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101.
**NEVER GONNA DANCE**
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Feb. 15.)
**THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
**THE PRODUCERS**
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
**THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW**
Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
**THE THING ABOUT MEN**
Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.
**WICKED**
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

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## DANCE

**NEW YORK CITY BALLET**
In George Balanchine's work, women generally look as though they've flown in from heaven. They are Beatrice, not Nancy Drew. But Balanchine did mount one dance drama about the girl next door, "Coppélia," based on an old Russian ballet, and it reënters the repertory on Feb. 11. The lovely score is by Delibes; the choreography is a mix of Balanchine and post-Petipa. The story tells of how the enterprising heroine, Swanilda, conquers the forces of dream and darkness to get her boyfriend to the altar. Two final performances of "Jewels," Balanchine's poem to the three homes of his heart—St. Petersburg, Paris, and New York—round out that week. The following week is devoted to Peter Martins's brisk, two-act version of "The Sleeping Beauty." ♦ Feb. 11 and Feb. 13-14 at 8 and Feb. 15 at 3: "Coppélia." ♦ Feb. 12 at 8 and Feb. 14 at 2: "Jewels." ♦ Feb. 18-20 at 8, Feb. 21 at 2 and 8, Feb. 22 at 3, and Feb. 24 at 7:30: "The Sleeping Beauty." Through Feb. 29. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

**DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP**
Two choreographers share the next two weeks: Peggy Piacenza, with "For Whom Am I," a theatrical piece about real and imagined boundaries, and Susan Rethorst, with one old and one new work. Neon quotation marks frame the stage for Rethorst's "Don't Go Without Your Echo," from 1998, and the punctuation would work just as well with her new piece, "Oh Oh Oh." The exquisite dancers change the tone with the slightest shake or the subtlest shift. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Piacenza: Feb. 11-12 and Feb. 20-21 at 7. Rethorst: Feb. 18-19 at 7. Through Feb. 28.)

**DIXON PLACE**
The organization presents a raft of new dances at venues all over town. At Chashama, Kimberly Brandt curates "Brink," a new series that begins with a triple feature of women choreographers: the solo "Azul/Verde," by Regina Nejman; an excerpt of "Tectonica and Her Terre-Belles," by Wendy Osserman; and "The Horny Girls," a delightfully silly fusion of sketch comedy and dance created and performed by Clare Byrne and Amy Larimer. Dressed in green tights, leotards, crests, and tails, they mimic reptile behavior and show how iguanas might move to Streisand and the Bee Gees. At the Joyce SoHo, Shannon Hummel's Cora company performs "Half Empty," an evening of dance about loss, regret, and hope; and at University Settlement Arthur Aviles inaugurates the new series "Moving Men," featuring male

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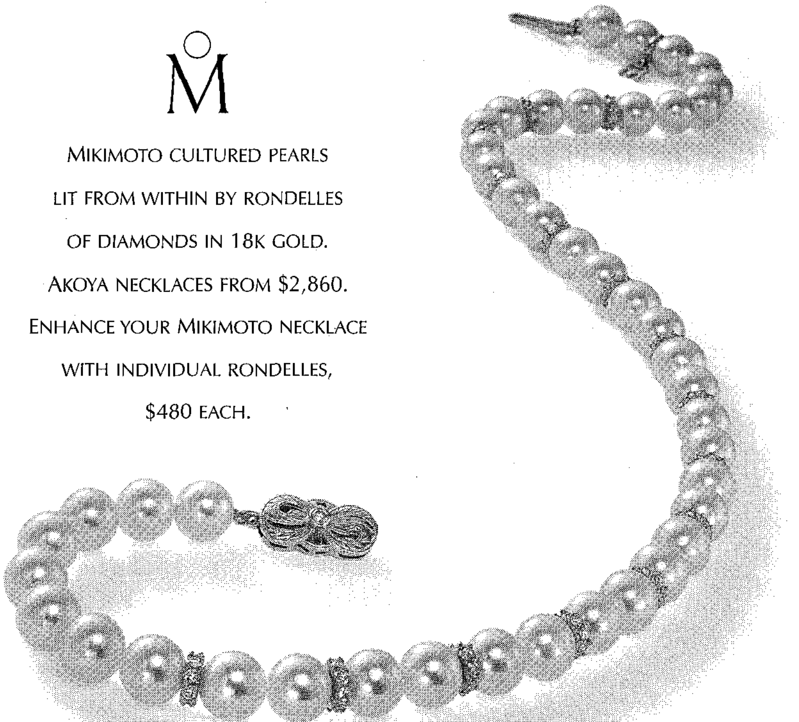
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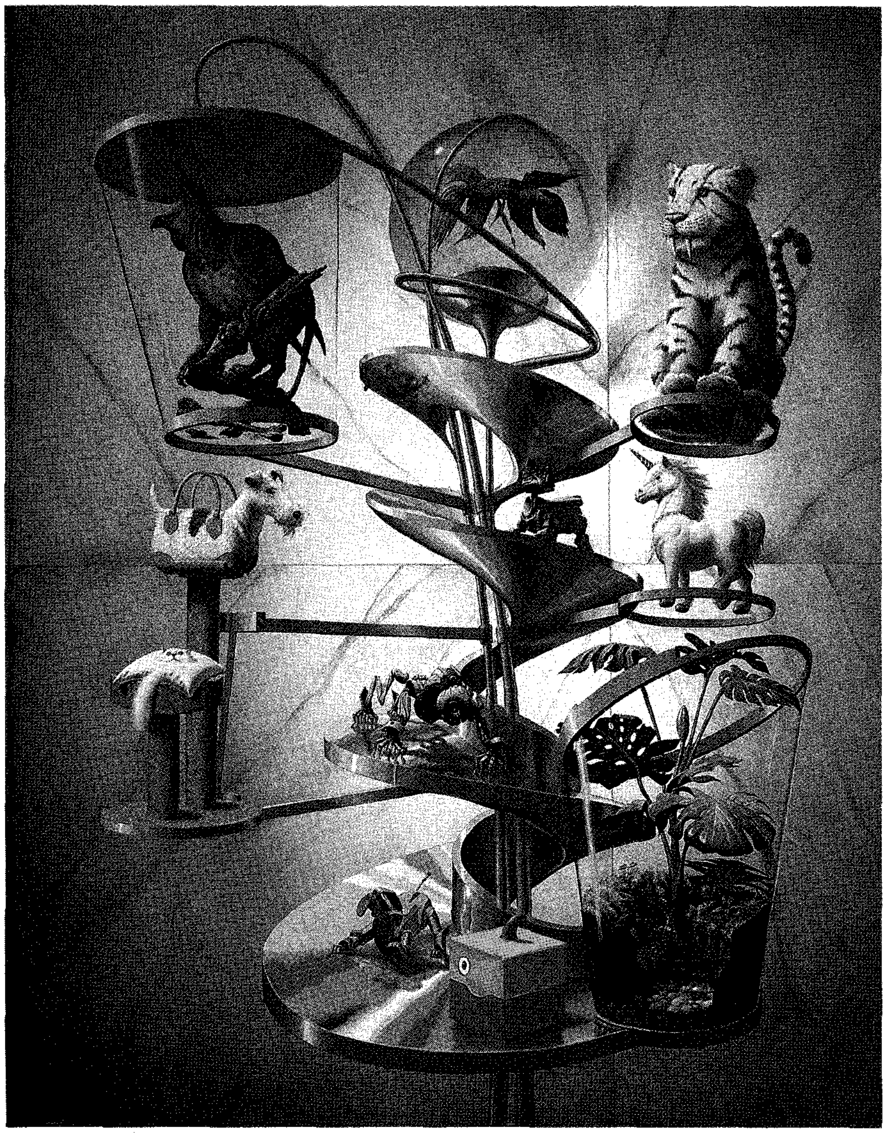


*"Pet Shop," by Alexis Rockman, in "Future Noir," at Gorney Bravin, & Lee.*

dancers and choreographers. ("Half Empty": Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. Feb. 19-22 at 8. "Moving Men": University Settlement, 184 Eldridge St. Feb. 23 at 8. "Brink": Chashama, 111 W. 42nd St. Feb. 23-24 at 8. For more information, see www.dixonplace.org. For tickets to all venues, call 212-219-0736.)

**DANSPACE**

Two ballet-influenced modern-dance choreographers have seasons at St. Mark's In-the-Bowery over the next two weeks: Cherylyn Lavagnino, with "Encounters," a work that explores the psychology of human interaction; and Pam Tanowitz, with "Love Storyless," an abstract work that fuses a cerebral modern consciousness with a classical instinct for beauty. "Love Storyless" is set to John Adams's "China Gates" and "Phrygian Gates," performed live by the pianist Molly Morkoski. (Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. "Encounters": Feb. 12-15 at 8:30. "Love Storyless": Feb. 19-22 at 8:30.)

**SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY**

The seventeen-member company from Australia (their home is the Sydney Opera House) performs "Ellipse," a gruelling, glitzy suite choreographed by the company's director, Graeme Murphy. Lights orbit the stage, the garish costumes change frequently, and Matthew Hindson's compositions for orchestra and cello and piano (presented here on tape) are earsplitting—one was inspired by the heavy-metal band Metallica. (The Joyce, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 17-20 at 8, Feb. 21 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 22 at 2.)

**"PABLO ASLAN'S AVANTANGO"**

In what is becoming a Valentine's Day tradition, the bassist and composer Pablo Aslan returns to Town Hall with his jazz-inflected tango band, sharing the stage with four topnotch dancers. Last year's concert emphasized range, sampling a gamut of styles, traditional and experimental; this year, the focus is on innovation and on fusion of forms. (123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Feb. 14 at 8.)

**"YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL"**

The inventive Philadelphia troupe Headlong Dance Theatre collaborated with Kyoto's Arrow Dance Communication on this wry examination of cross-cultural communication. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. Feb. 12-13 at 7:30.)

**"LINES IN THE SAND: HELEN IN EGYPT"**

Joan Jonas presents a new multimedia work at the Kitchen that explores the myth of Helen of Troy, blending text from H.D.'s "Helen in Egypt" and "Tribute to Freud" with prerecorded and live video, drawings by Jonas of Egyptian symbols (pyramids, the Sphinx) and spirals, and ritual dance. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Feb. 19-21 and Feb. 24 at 8. Through Feb. 28.)

**"NIJINSKY"**

Over his long career choreographing in Germany, John Neumeier, the director of the Hamburg Ballet, has shown no fear of big themes. With "Nijinsky," though, he's set himself the seemingly impossible task of representing a dance genius through dance. His solution is to divide Nijinsky's signature roles—Petrouchka, the Golden Slave, the Faun—among multiple dancers, thus providing an obvious metaphor for the protagonist's schizophrenia. The result is visually striking and expertly danced but very convoluted. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Feb. 20-21 at 8 and Feb. 22 at 2.)

**NETA DANCE COMPANY**

Neta Pulvermacher's hybrid performance "The Orchid Show," first shown at the Kitchen in 2000, takes the form of a television infotainment program (hosted by a man in drag) on the strange allure of the hermaphroditic blooms. In this expanded staging, five dancers in costumes of vinyl and AstroTurf leap giddily across pastel lily pads, singing songs written by Pulvermacher and Tami Stronach. (The Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. Feb. 13 and Feb. 20 at 9, Feb. 14 and Feb. 21 at 1 and 5, and Feb. 15 and Feb. 22 at 3.)

## NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

**STEREOPHONICS AND HOWIE DAY**

Though well established in the U.K., the Stereophonics, a Welsh trio, have yet to crack the Stateside market with their burly alternative rock. "You Gotta Go There to Come Back" moves beyond the band's earlier guitar-based clamor. The twenty-three-year-old singer-songwriter Day hails from Bangor, Maine. His second album, "Stop All the World Now," has yielded a radio hit, "Perfect Time of Day." (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Feb. 12 at 7:30.)

**WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE**

Feb. 12 at 8: Zen music from Japan, with **Marco Lienhard** and **Masayo Ishigure.** (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) Feb. 14 at 8: Pablo Aslan's **Avantango.** (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St.) Feb. 21 at 8: **Perú Negro.** See This Week. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St.) (For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7536.)

**TOBY KEITH**

The country artist, actor, and discount-long-distance pitchman has courted both fortune and infamy with "Courtesy of the Red White and Blue (the Angry American)" and other unapologetic odes to the United States' current foreign policy. His latest album, titled "Shock 'n Y'All," stays the course. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Feb. 13 at 7:30.)

**RUFUS WAINWRIGHT**

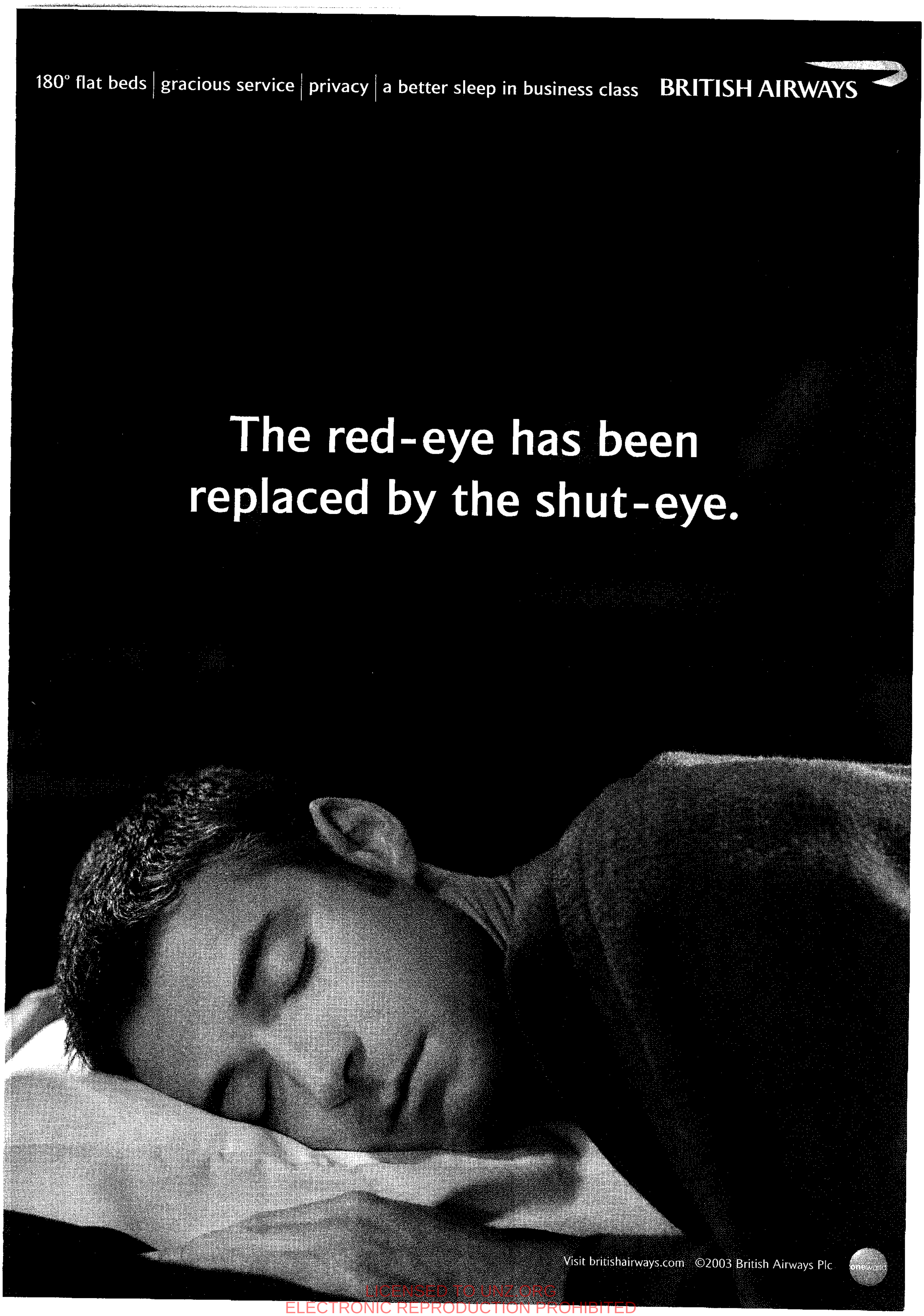
Wainwright's third and most recent album, "Want One," is modern pop at its most baroque: choral and orchestral arrangements soar through gorgeous melodies. His songs are primarily concerned with longing and disappointment (Morrissey without the cynicism), and he pines with considerable charm. In concert, without the lush production of the record, Wainwright's outsized romantic voice will float to the top of the songs. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. Feb. 13 at 8.)

**JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER**

Feb. 13 at 8: **Shirley Horn** may no longer accompany herself on piano, but she has lost none of her ability to caress a song. The pianist **Ahmad Jamal** retains all of his vaunted eccentricities; no one else sounds remotely like him. (Avery Fisher Hall.) Feb. 19 and Feb. 21 at 8: Ornette Coleman won't be on hand as the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** interprets his compositions, but his compatriot from the sixties and seventies, the tenor saxophonist **Dewey Redman,** is a fine choice to fill his shoes. (Alice Tully Hall.) Feb. 19-21 at 8: The "Singers Over Manhattan" series continues as the wry swing and blues of the ageless pianist, singer, and composer **Mose Allison** shares a bill with the plush vocals of **Paula West,** a San Francisco-based talent gaining a greater following with every East Coast appearance. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building.) (For more information about all shows, call 212-721-6500.)

**"ARTS AT ST. ANN'S"**

Feb. 13 at 8: The avant-garde trombone patriarch **Roswell Rudd** is joined by **Mamadou Diabate** and other Malian musicians from his recent album "Mali-



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cool." Feb. 14 at 8: The erstwhile Golden Palominos vocalist **Syd Straw** and friends present their annual "Heartwreck Show." (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

**ENRIQUE IGLESIAS**

*In 1999, this young Spaniard swivelled into the* dreams of America's women with an eponymous crossover album of danceable pop and concupiscent balladeering. It's an approach that keeps his albums on the charts. His romantic appeal is rivalled only by that of his father—the prototypical Latin lover, Julio. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. Feb. 14 at 8.)

**"LYRICS & LYRICISTS"**

The songs of Harry Warren ("I Only Have Eyes for You," "Lullaby of Broadway") are in good hands with **Mary Cleere Haran,** a singer who lives and breathes the classic prewar repertoire. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 14 at 8, Feb. 15 at 2:30 and 8, and Feb. 16 at 2 and 8.)

*"Subway, 1980," part of a show of Bruce Davidson's photographs currently at Leica/Hermès (see Photography).*

MAGNUM

**"LIVE FROM HOME"**

The winning acoustic-music series at the Housing Works Used Book Café continues with **Mary Chapin Carpenter, Grant Lee Phillips,** and **Eastmountainsouth.** (126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. Feb. 20 at 7:30.)

## CLUBS

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*

**B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL**

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Feb. 11: The **Zombies** may have been a second-tier British Invasion band, but a few singles from their sixties heyday became radio staples, notably the haunting "She's Not There" and "Time of the Season." The vocalist Colin Blunstone and the keyboardist Rod Argent, the mainstays of the original Zombies, have recently resurrected the band. Feb. 12: The Chicago blues sovereign **Bo Diddley** played a central role in the evolution of rock and roll, and his signature guitar style has been mimicked by everyone from Buddy Holly to U2. He brings his trademark square guitar and irrepressible bounce to celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday. Feb. 20: **Buckwheat Zydeco** *breaks out the washboard and* accordion.

**BOWERY BALLROOM**

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Feb. 19: The erudite indie quartet **Franz Ferdinand,** a post-punk outfit from Scotland, practices a stiff but grooving blend of jerky guitar-based pop that sounds like the Strokes after a few semesters at the Sorbonne. Feb. 20: The Chicago jam band **Umphrey's McGee** is joined by the jazz saxophonist **Joshua Redman.**

**FEZ**

380 Lafayette St. (212-533-7000)—Feb. 11 and Feb. 13-14: The **Loser's Lounge** toys with the James Bond film scores of John Barry. The **Mingus Big Band** *still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.*

**IRVING PLAZA**

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Feb. 14-15: Two nights of visceral guitar pop with the **Shins,** from Albuquerque. Feb. 21: Led by Luther and Cody Dickinson, sons of the legendary producer and musician Jim Dickinson, the **North Mississippi Allstars** (whose lineup also includes the guitarist Duwayne Burnside, son of the Delta-blues great R. L. Burnside) crank out Southern roots rock that transcends generations.

**JOE'S PUB**

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Feb. 12: *Jimmy Carter was in the White House when the* **Holmes Brothers** first started playing New York bars. A series of records, starting with their 1989 début, "In the Spirit," took them from back rooms to television talk-show green rooms and beyond. The Brothers' latest, "Simple Truths," exhibits a casual mastery of blues, soul, gospel, R. & B., and country that younger, looser groups can't touch. Feb. 22: The down-home swamp rock of the vocalist and pianist **Marcia Ball.** Feb. 24: The retro-obsessed local music scene has given short shrift to the prog-rock of the seventies. No more, now that the **East Village Opera Company** is open for business. This international outfit (the founders are from Canada; many of the musicians are New Yorkers) goes straight to the source, with rock, disco, and otherwise amplified interpretations of Verdi, Rossini, and so forth.

**MERCURY LOUNGE**

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Feb. 14: The **Autumn Defense,** featuring John Stirratt, from Wilco. Feb. 19: The complexly arranged, guitar-driven post-punk of Brooklyn's **Pilot to Gunner.** Feb. 22: The **High Llamas** mix equal parts Burt Bacharach and Beach Boys, and "Umbrellas of Cherbourg" Technicolor to make smooth music that's easy on the ears and, often, on the mind. With **CocoRosie,** two sisters who share the high-pitched vocal style of certain early female blues singers. They favor sparse accompaniment, often just a bit of guitar, and such unlikely instruments as gold-chain belts.

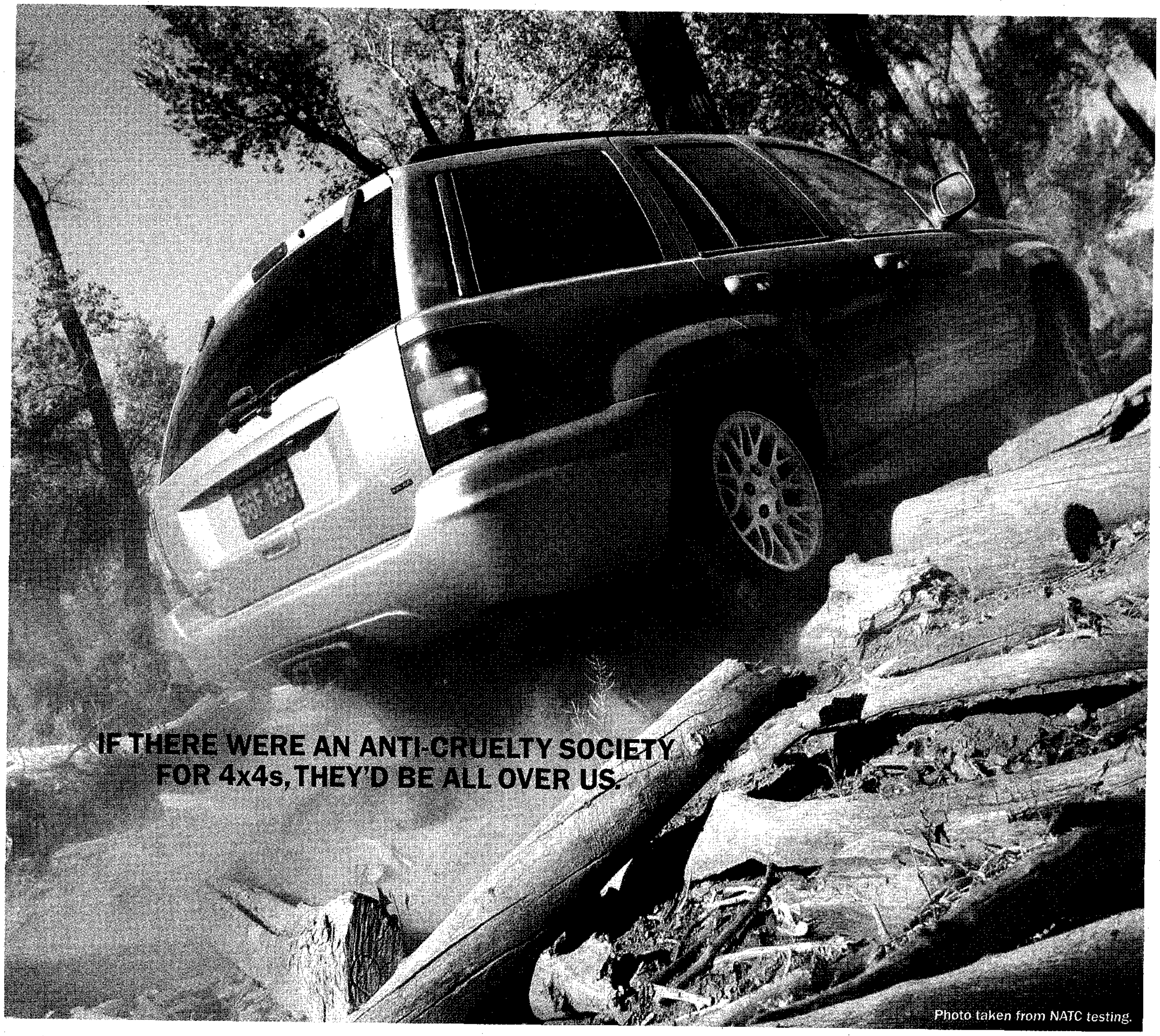
**SATALLA**

37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Feb. 13: The Celtic vocalist **Cathie Ryan,** a former member of Cherish the Ladies. Feb. 14: **Fantcha,** a native of Cape Verde who now lives in Brooklyn, learned the intricacies of *morna,* the sweet, sad songs of her homeland, from Cesaria Evora. On her two albums available here, "Criolinha" and "Viva Mindelo," she spices up the earthy island blues with *coladeiras* (faster-paced *mornas*) and Afro-Brazilian touches such as samba rhythms. Feb. 20: The accordionist **Terrance Simien** and his friends from southwest Louisiana celebrate Mardi Gras.

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

**ALGONQUIN HOTEL**

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Starting Feb. 17: **Tierney Sutton.** Any contemporary singer who evokes the standard-bearer Frank Sinatra is courting danger, but on Sutton's new album, "Dancing in the Dark," she finds her own way into the Master's material. Her delicate swing and sensitivity are bracing.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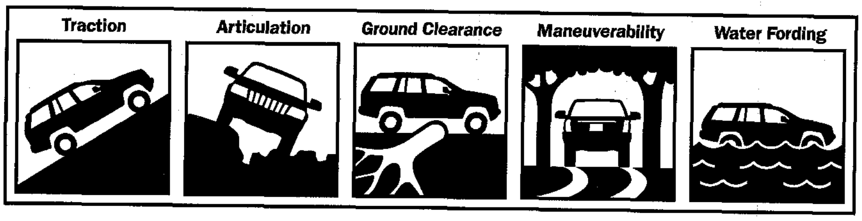
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**BLUE NOTE**
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Feb. 11-12: The vocalist **Cassandra Wilson.** Feb. 13-15: The sharp-witted rapper and actor **Mos Def** explores his love of jazz.

**CARLYLE HOTEL**
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Feb. 28, the vocalist **Christine Andreas.**

**FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY**
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Feb. 14: The big-hearted entertainer **Steve Tyrell.** Starting Feb. 17: **Christine Ebersole,** a Tony winner for "42nd Street," gets support from the pianist **Billy Stritch,** best known for his musical association with Liza Minnelli.

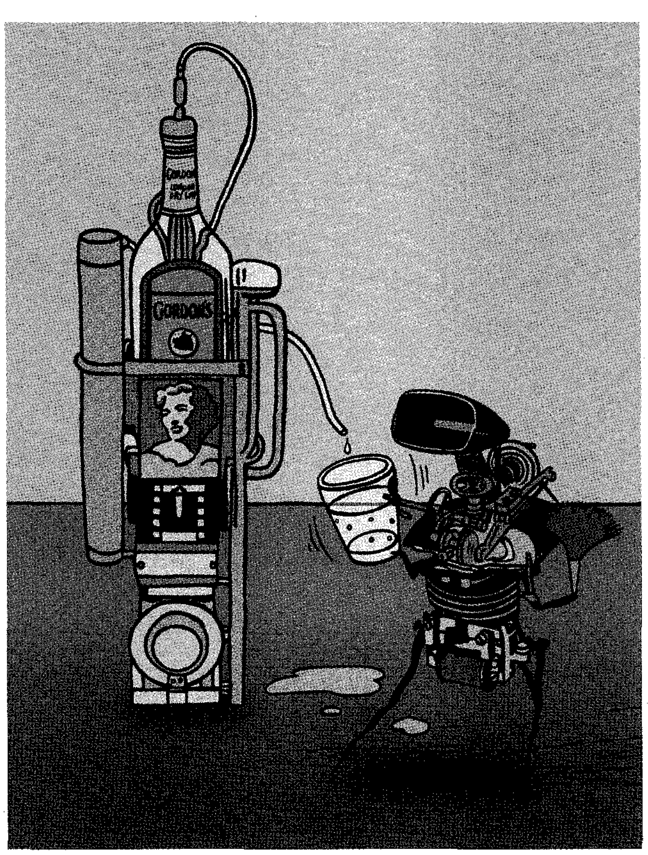
**IRIDIUM**
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Feb. 10-11: It may not be in her repertoire, but if anyone deserves to sing Stephen Sondheim's "I'm Still Here," it's the octogenarian **Anita O'Day.** Swing remains her lifeblood. Feb. 12-15: **Grady Tate** is a great drummer who could easily have made it as a singer. The old-school stylist joins **Nnenna Freelon** for a program of love songs. The saxophonist **Frank Wess** will also be on hand. Feb. 17-19: The **Conga Kings.** This city has moved to the pulse of the conga drum for a long time. Candido, Carlos (Patato) Valdes, and Giovanni Hidalgo demonstrate how the union of hand and hide can produce sublime rhythms. Feb. 20-22: The Kings are joined by **Ray Barretto.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

**LE JAZZ AU BAR**
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Feb. 11-14: The singer **Marlena Shaw,** an alumna of the Count Basie band, has made a career out of blurring the lines between jazz, pop, and R. & B. Feb. 18-21: If the pianist **George Shearing** has ever played an inelegant note in his five-decade jazz career, no one seems to remember it. Shearing uses bop, swing, classical, and Latin piano phrases to design densely melodic solos.

**JAZZ GALLERY**
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Feb. 12-13: The bassist **Avishai Cohen,** a sideman who thinks like a leader, is impressive in Chick Corea's bands; on his own, Cohen incorporates Middle Eastern influences into his compositions and takes time to play keyboards. Feb. 20: The pianist **Orrin Evans** and his quartet.

**JAZZ STANDARD**
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Feb. 12-15: **Jimmy Scott.** No longer "Little" in either name (he dropped that moniker years ago) or age (he's now nearly eighty), Scott has a reservoir of emotion and expressivity to back up his timeworn voice. Feb. 17: A present-day ironist with a prewar heart (pre-First World War, that is), the guitarist, vocalist, and composer Matt Munisteri leads the swinging chamber-jazz quintet **Brock Mumford.** Munisteri's tunes sit well alongside vintage work by Willard Robison, Hoagy Carmichael, and even, in the case of the band's take on "Don't Think Twice It's Alright," Bob Dylan.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Feb. 15: **Mark Turner's** tenor saxophone blends unlikely influences. Perhaps taking a tip from Sonny Rollins and Joe Henderson, both of whom recorded bare-bones live albums at the Vanguard, Turner cuts his band down to a trio, with the drummer **Jeff Ballard** and the bassist **Larry Grenadier.** Feb. 17-22: The pianist **Jacky Terrason** attracted attention about a decade ago, but his career never took off as expected. Here he brings along the bassist **Sean Smith** and the drummer **Eric Harland.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



*Paul Etienne Lincoln's gin-and-tonic machine, from his show of gizmo sculptures, at Alexander and Bonin.*

PETER HAMLIN

## ART
## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—The name Chuck Close instantly conjures images of giant gridded portraits, tight and deadpan in Photo-Realist black-and-white in the seventies, with more recent versions dissolving in loose lozenges of color. **"Chuck Close Prints: Process and Collaboration"** shows that all the portraiture of self and others went along with constant experiments in the practice of printmaking. Etching, silk screen, linoleum and woodblock prints, and hand-constructed pulp-paper multiples are tracked through various proof states, and actual woodblocks, etched copper panels, and other studio paraphernalia also appear. The show is as much a primer in the printmaker's art as it is a retrospective of Close faces. Through April 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)**
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Kiki Smith: Prints, Books & Things"** shows off a compendium of the artist's favored images: eyes, breasts, birds, babies, cats, Little Red Riding Hood, and the starry sky. Although she's primarily a sculptor, this retrospective of works on paper and fabric makes it clear that her three-dimensional thinking is deeply influenced by the etchings, artist's books, and even Xeroxes collected here. The range of works is impressive, from Smith's first experiments with silk screen in the eighties to the beautiful "Blue Feet," a series of drypoints and etchings made last year, and they reveal a side of her that's quick, funny, luscious, and fragile. Through March 8. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

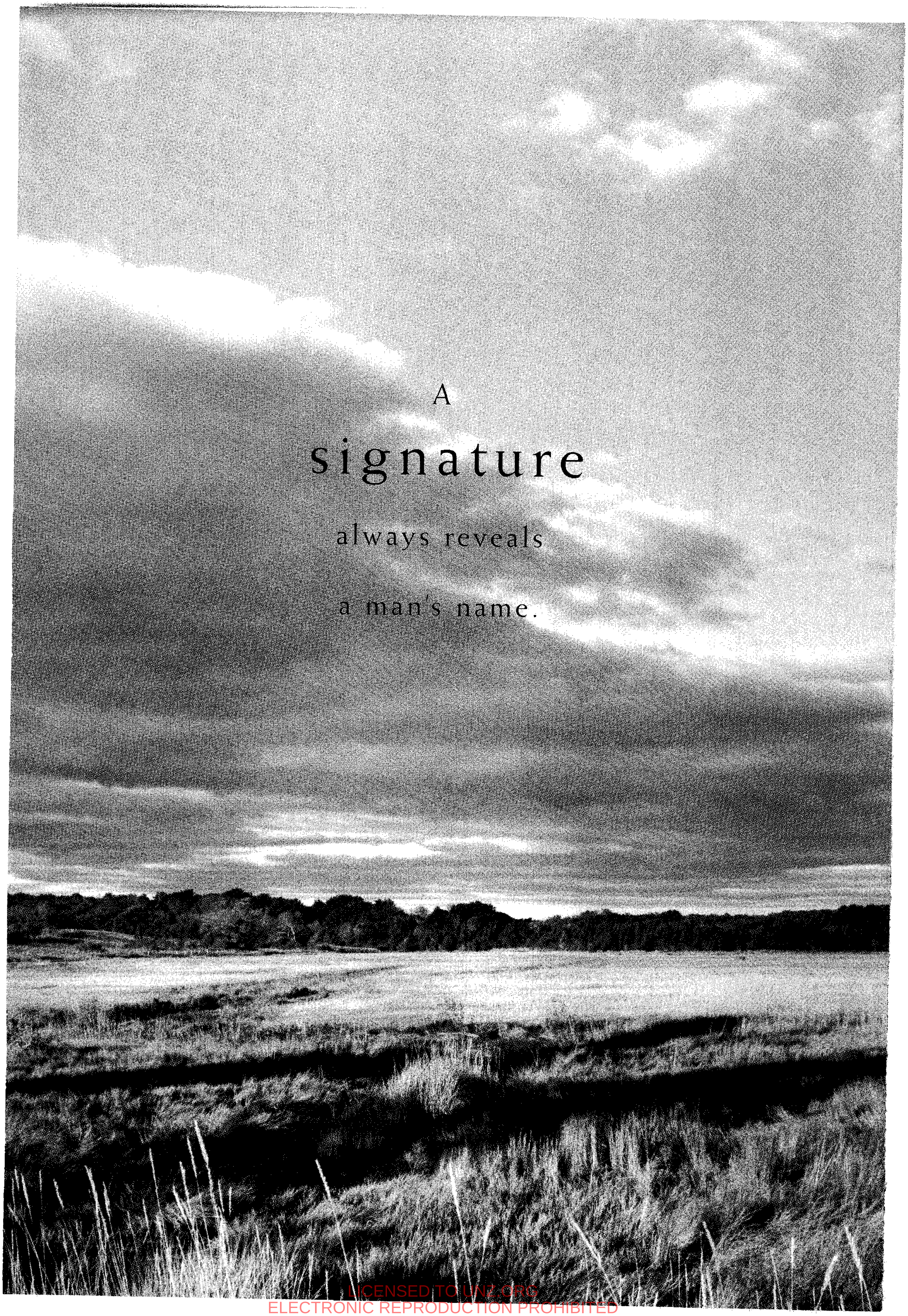
**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Boccioni's Materia: A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-Garde in Milan and Paris."** Through May 9. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The sparkling mid-career painting retrospective **"John Currin"** should be this season's major conversation piece. Topic: how have super-old-fashioned, alternately academic- and schlocky-looking figure paintings become the bee's knees in contemporary art? Currin's mostly imagined winsome nudes, pathetic males, society dames, gay couples, and, oh yes, women with breasts as big as the Ritz make everybody nervous in one way or another. They also display phenomenal degrees of skill and subtleties of expression. Once you start looking at Currin's stuff, it's all you can do to stop. Through Feb. 22. ♦ **"Arshile Gorky: A Retrospective of Drawings."** Through Feb. 15. ♦ The Bay Area painter Jay De Feo (1929-89) is best known for her magnum opus, "The Rose." It took her eight years (1958-66) to complete, and by the time it was extricated from her studio it weighed more than a ton. (The studio floor had grown so encrusted with paint that the artist Bruce Conner, who filmed the painting's removal, said that walking on it felt "like walking on the back of a whale.") "The Rose," with its radiant mass of silvery-white impasto, lies literally at the center of this small but potent show, **"Beside the Rose: Selected Works by Jay De Feo."** But the show opens with a more typical gesture: a seven-foot-long drawing of a ghostly pair of eyes. Puzzling vertical lines simultaneously fracture the image and heighten its oracular intensity—a struggle between obfuscation and revelation that's at the heart of De Feo's elusive art. Through Feb. 29. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA**
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—What do you get when you cross a minimalist box with a hip-hop backbeat? It's an odd question, but Luis Gispert's installation sets about broadcasting the answer, and it makes pulsating, oddly perfect sense. His angular plywood construction includes a duct draped with silver chains, geometric wall drawings suggestive of woofers and tweeters, and some telltale stereo equipment. Things seem too quiet? Sit down in the benchlike nook: hidden motion sensors turn on a private sense experience. Through March 12. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

**ASIA SOCIETY**
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-517-2742)—The Old Masters of the West used plaster church walls and altarpieces; Japanese artists opted for delicate, movable paper screens, but it would be heresy to describe the examples in **"Golden Fantasies: Japanese Screens from New York Collections"** as furniture. "Battles of Ichinotani and Yashima," from the early seventeenth century, is a sprawling, epic frieze set against a gold-leaf landscape with intricate vistas of the cavalry battles fought in the twelfth century, which produced Japan's first shogun. "Cherry-Blossom and Maple Viewing," from the mid-seventeenth century, is more peaceful, but no less opulent. Go early and come back: new screens will be installed on April 6. Through June 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

**FRICK COLLECTION**
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Parma, the birthplace of prosciutto, parmigiano reggiano, and the beleaguered Parmalat, also produced the artist Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, better known as Parmigianino (1503-40). More than sixty of his works on loan from the Louvre, the British Museum, and Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum are on view in **"A Beautiful and Gracious**

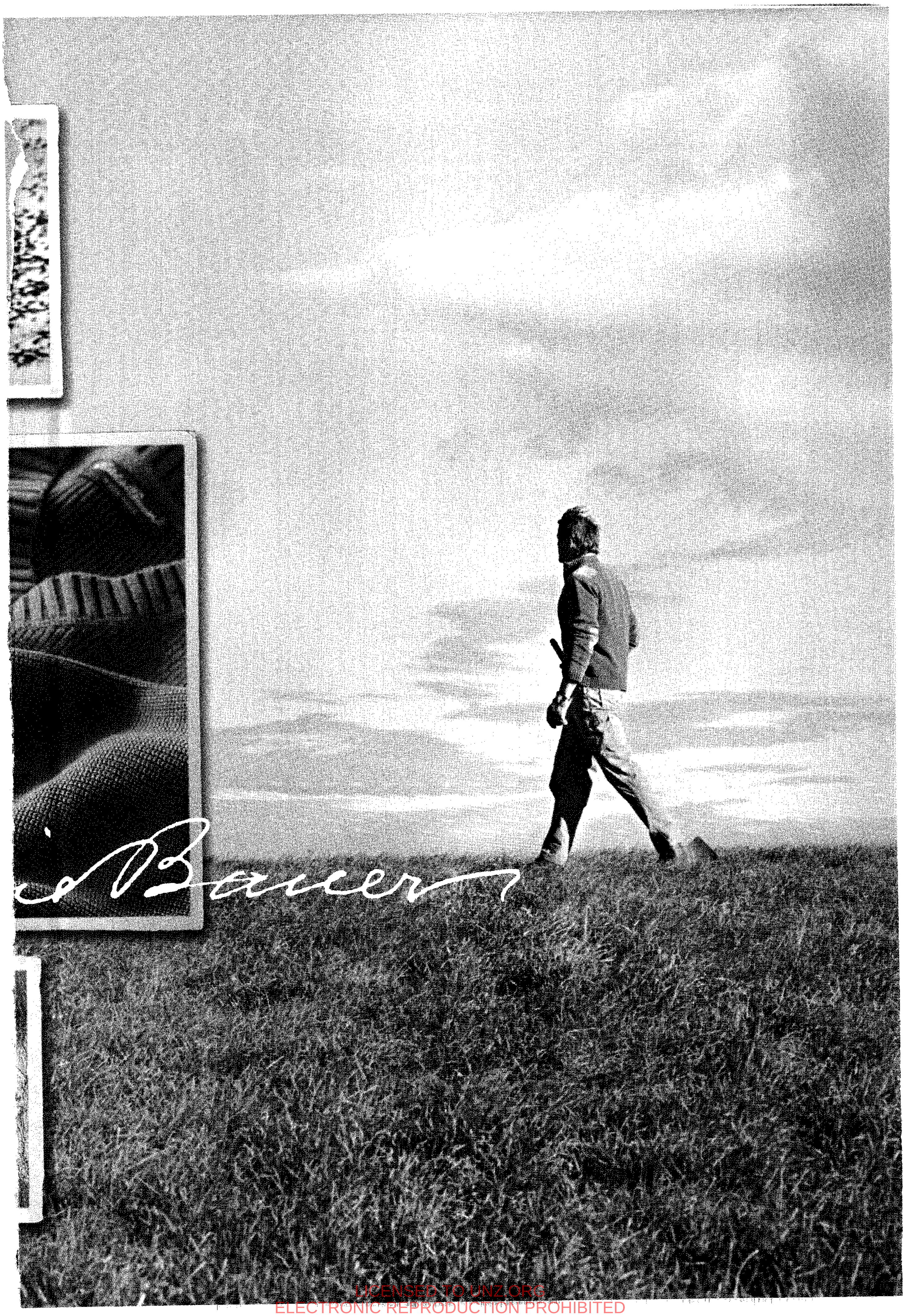


A

signature

always reveals

a man's name.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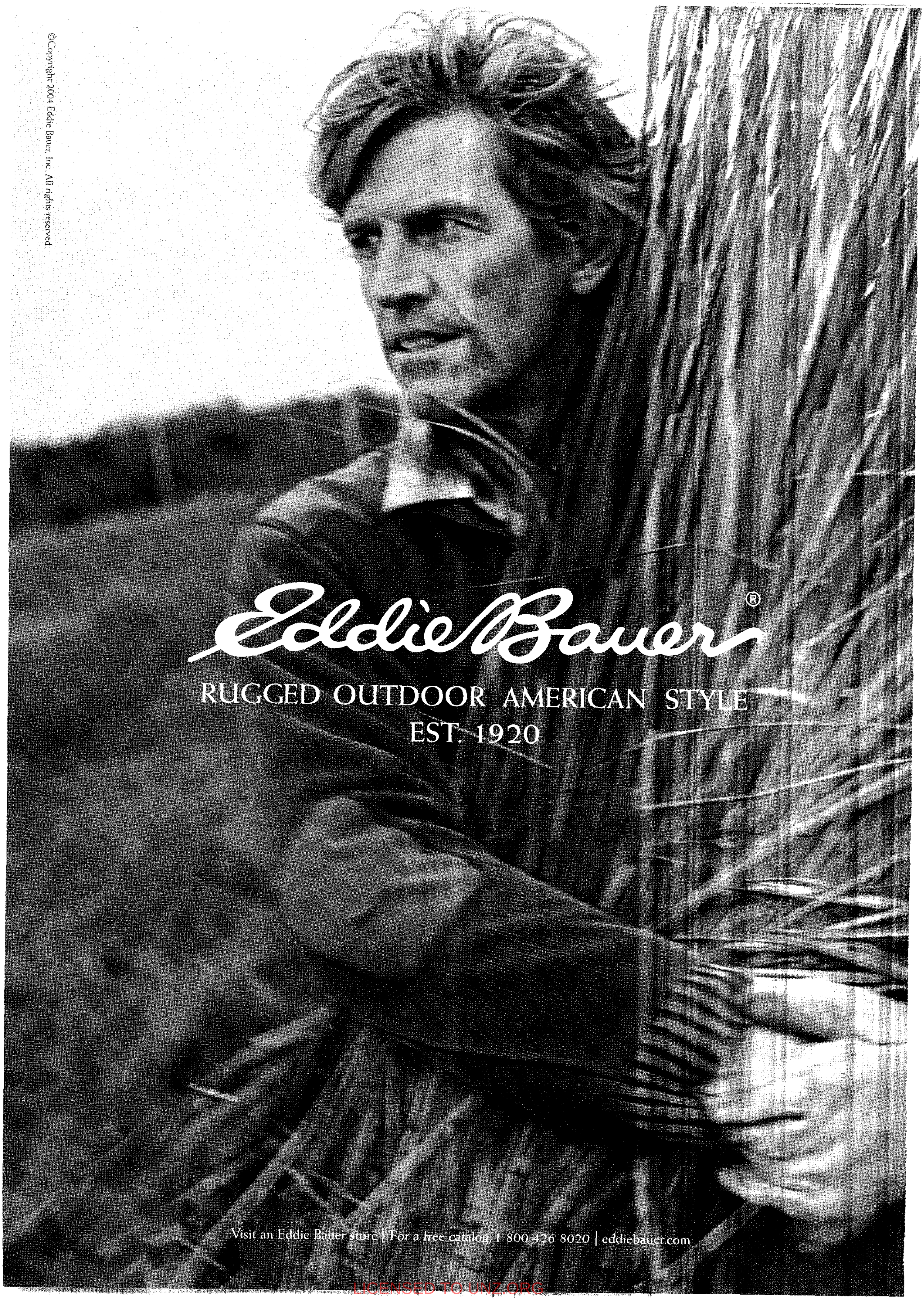

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**Manner: The Art of Parmigianino."** The exquisite collection includes studies for his famed "Madonna of the Long Neck" (which never leaves the Uffizi in Florence), matchbook-size *primi pensieri*, or "first thought" sketches, and the painting (and preparatory drawing of) "Circumcision," a gift to the Medici-backed Pope Clement VII. The Mannerist master was also one of the first Italian artists to produce his own prints, a handful of which are also on view. Through April 18. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Friday evenings until 9; and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

## GALLERIES–UPTOWN

*Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.*

**PAULA HAYES**
The playfully titled "Forest" is really a room full of ferns, evergreens, palms, and succulents. The plants are potted in biomorphic silicone containers arranged around the room on blond wood pedestals; they look like Brancusi sculptures filled with dirt and sprouting a few leaves. Hayes also experiments with a mulch-type material made from recycled tires, which she's scattered at the base of one planter and used to create a design in the yard behind the gallery (more visible when the snow clears). Three psychedelic drawings of characters called Shoomu and Jill Poet feature human heads in profile sprouting up from bulbous forms that recall both the silicone containers and the mushrooms you might find in a real forest. Through March 17. (Salon 94, at 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.)

**MARK ROTHKO**
These Rothkos put the reproductions in art-history books to shame. They all come from 1949, the year the Ab Ex master made his breakthrough. First he gives himself permission to banish representation. Next he covers his surfaces with patches of bold, shimmering color. Then in "Untitled 1949," on loan from the National Gallery, he breaks into five-part harmony with registers of yellow, purple, green, black, and orange. The paintings are reunited for the first time in half a century and arranged chronologically (taking into account some customary date-fudging by the artist) so that you can witness inspiration and discovery unfolding. Through Feb. 23. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 W. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

### *Short List*

**JOSEPH BEUYS**
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.
212-744-2313. Through Feb. 14.

## GALLERIES–CHELSEA

**NAYLAND BLAKE**
Blake's signature form, the bunny suit, is problematic. First of all, there's the cutesiness factor, which is impossible to avoid, even when the subtext is dominance and submission, masquerade and self-display. This time, Blake's bunnies include a sixteen-foot stuffed specimen in white nylon and several kid-size versions sewn from old black concert T-shirts. The suits appear alongside a series of videos that show the artist's bearded face being slapped by hands from outside the frame or smeared with chocolate frosting. Through Feb. 21. (Matthew Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

**NATHAN CARTER**
These wall-mounted sculptures, crafted out of wood and painted to look like aerial views of a toy-train village, refer to the jargon of C.B. and pirate radios, air-traffic-control communications, and ship-to-shore weather reports. "Shropshire Tower to Echo Lima Kilo 69er 6 Reporting Exceptionally Violent Actual Over" is dotted with little pine trees and emblems based on Swiss canton flags. "Murmansk Calling Radio Zagreb Stop Carrying Out Your Intentions and Wait for My Signals" is a stark, commanding red and white. Through Feb. 21. (Casey Kaplan, 416 W. 14th St. 212-645-7335.)

**SANDRA CINTO**
The Brazilian artist Sandra Cinto has constructed a chapel-like shanty in the gallery. It is made from tongue-and-groove panelling painted in sea-and-sky shades of turquoise and blue, windows set in a peekaboo fashion, which makes the light inside seem to flicker. A series of photographs are mounted inside, and the self-consciously suggestive imagery, which includes naked light bulbs and isolated candle flames, dilutes rather than enhances the effect of the delicate house. Through Feb. 14. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144.)

**JOY GARNETT**
Garnett's series "Riot" finds a common ground between violent street demonstrations and the leaps and grimaces of rock and roll. You can spot the threatening good looks of a rocker in the long-haired boy throwing a Molotov cocktail, as well as in the uniformed young pilot hugging his girlfriend on an airstrip. Garnett's brushy impasto pushes the vérité elements of the images (which are derived from news photos) toward glam. Through Feb. 21. (Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 212-643-2070.)

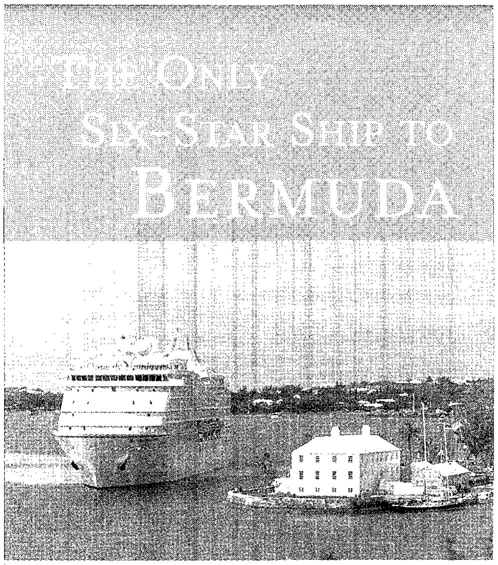
**FRANZ GERTSCH / CHRIS BURDEN**
A series of photographs that Gertsch took of Patti Smith, in Germany in 1977, show the rocker as a lanky, equine beauty in skin-tight red pants, communing with her stacked amps and guitars. The photos are reproduced in colossal paintings by the artist, also from the seventies. His adoration appears sincere, but little is added that wasn't in the original images. Gertsch's gauzily distanced detail fares better in his enormous landscape woodcuts. In an adjacent room, the same combination of finicky precision and esteem plays out quite differently in Burden's austere models of famous bridges constructed from Erector and Meccano sets. Through Feb. 28. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

**PAUL ETIENNE LINCOLN**
Lincoln takes a high-tech, mad-scientist approach to gizmo sculptures, which look like gin-and-tonic machines or ritual accessories—if the rituals required glass tubes attached to a tree, with the tubing twisted to spell out incantations. Each of the prints, multiples, books, CDs, photographs, and other ephemera in this collection has a tongue-in-cheek religiosity, but the sleek brushed-steel vitrines and the impeccable packaging present the alchemy in an atmosphere of expensive tastefulness. Through Feb. 21. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

**MARLENE MC CARTY**
McCarty returns to a favorite if gruesome subject: children who kill their parents. She is concerned specifically with Marlene Olive, a Marin County, California, teen who murdered her mother in 1975. Wall texts describe the facts of the case, and six mural-size drawings in graphite and ballpoint pen offer fantasy visions of Olive's family, cuddled in cozy groups. One eerie drawing shows the girl and her boyfriend, Chuck, lying in her father's lap (Chuck shot the father in a fit of panic after Marlene murdered her mother). McCarty is also a well-regarded graphic designer, and her expert use of a style reminiscent of seventies-era print ads contrasts nicely with her forays into darker territory. Through Feb. 21. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

**JACK RISLEY**
Function is a secondary concern in these sculptures made of light industrial materials. "Whoo Hoo" turns a portable aluminum scaffold into an abstraction on wheels, complete with orange fabric protrusions that look like air ducts. The five camera tripods of "Over and Out," all of which are attached to a rail on the ceiling, can be moved through a hole cut in an interior gallery wall. The "Spokesmodel" is a bike outfitted with cardboard shapes that act as blinders. Risley's sculptures move the way that Möbius strips do, twisting and circling back on themselves. Through Feb. 21. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 212-727-3323.)

**"FUTURE NOIR"**
New work blinks and glistens on the adjacent walls, but four small, dark gouaches done by



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Syd Mead in 1980-81 (designs for the film "Blade Runner") set the tone. Amy Globus's haunting video of an octopus propelling itself through tight glass tubes is set to the strains of "Wrecking Ball," and Alexis Rockman's "Pet Shop" warns, in classic science-fiction style, that progress may not yield what we expect. Through March 6. (Gorney, Bravin & Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 212-352-8372.)

**"INDIVISIBLE CITIES"**
This group show brings together artists beguiled by doll-house landscapes—a snowcapped mountain in its own carrying case (by Katrin Sigurdardottir); a tall glass vase containing a tiny rowboat and a hapless rower (by Todd McCollister); what look like chunks of concrete rubble, each chunk carefully mounted on casters (by Tim Thyzel). With Fred Tomaselli, William Wegman, and Spencer Finch. Through Feb. 21. (Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 212-741-3318.)

**"ON PAPER"**
A collection of drawings from a group of twenty artists of various ages. The underlying theme is landscape and the application of drafting and design vocabularies in dreamy or nightmarish contexts, as in William Kentridge's brooding charcoal of the hill at Golgotha, or Shoshana Dentz's delicate gouache of a chain-link fence around an internment camp. Contributors include D. L. Alvarez, Chris Burden, Anna Maria Maiolino, Robert Smithson, and Hans Op de Beeck, whose sternly architectural rendering of a swimming pool manages to look both idyllic and terrifying. Through Feb. 28. (Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-3335.)

### *Short List*

**JENNIFER STEINKAMP**
Lehmann-Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through Feb. 14.

**MARC QUINN**
Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929. Through Feb. 28.

## GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

**ROSEMARIE BECK**
Old Master order and Impressionist deconstruction collide in Beck's classically inspired canvases. "Eurydice Mourned" and "Phaedra" take classical subjects (the reclining female nude and lamentations of Christ) and break them up with the dappled light of Monet and Renoir. "No Country for Old Men" updates Giorgione and Titian's bacchanals through Cézanne's broken brushwork. "Studio Window" looks out on the East Village, past a windowsill filled with still-life staples like a human skull and a bowl of apples. Even "Self-Portrait in Studio" rings a bell—ah, yes, Rembrandt's youthful self-portraits, with the artist looking out from a frizzy halo of hair with alert eyes, his face veiled in shadow. Through March 6. (New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 212-673-6466.)

**CHIVAS CLEM**
A wall-size video projection updates Yves Klein's famous "Leap Into the Void," from 1960. In the original, Klein jumped off a wall into a Parisian street; here Clem dives into the path of an oncoming F train. He blends media figures and mediums (Monica Lewinsky, the Menendez brothers, the Ramseys, European pornography) in collages and digital C-prints. One work which fairly represents his brand of insider archness, "You Can Never Be Too Rich or Too Thin," pairs photographs of grotesquely skinny women (CeCe Kieselstein-Cord and Calista Flockhart) with an equally anorexic Sarah Lucas sculpture. Through Feb. 22. (Maccarone, 45 Canal St. 212-431-4977.)

## GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

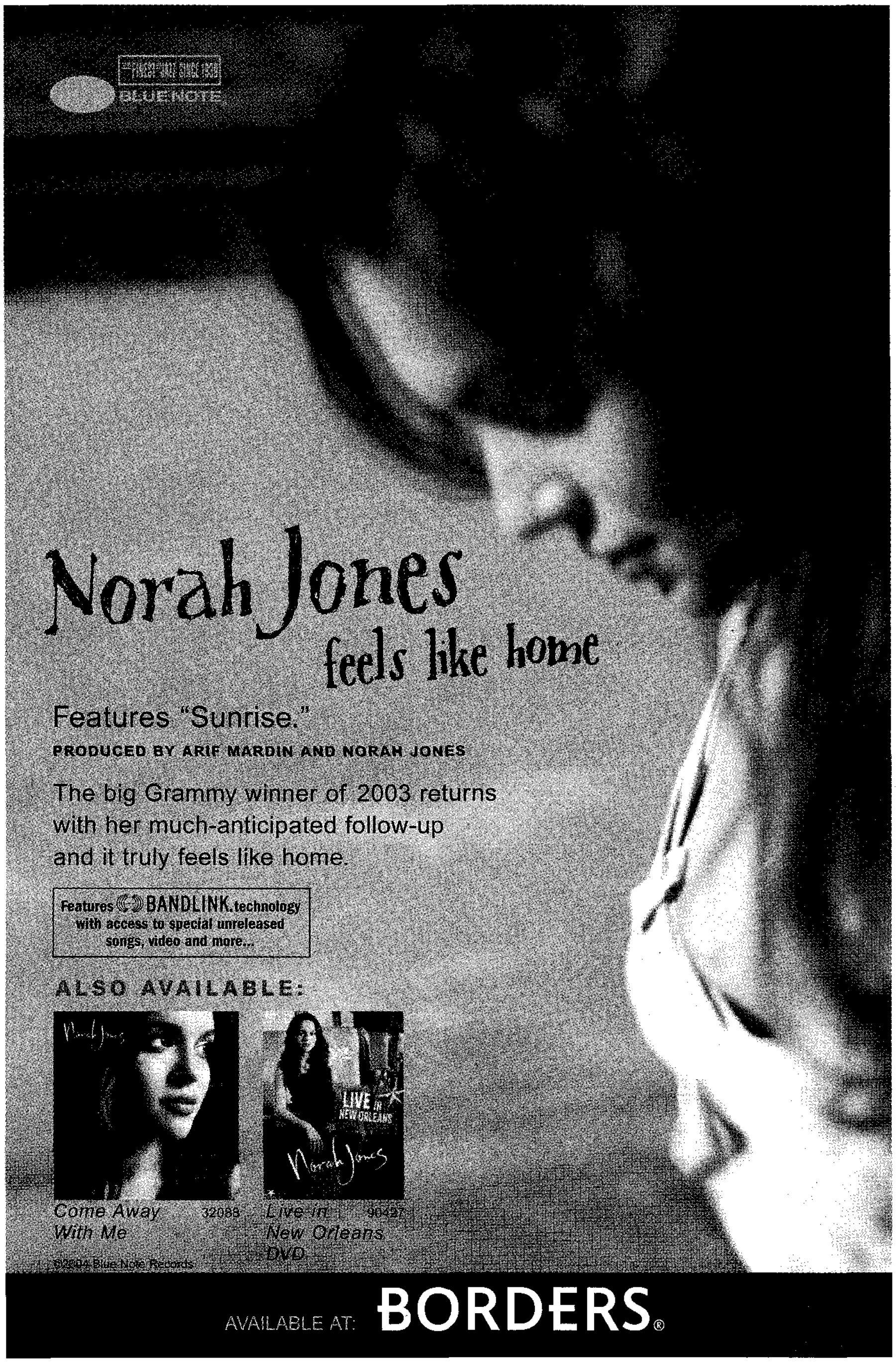
**"ON A WAVE"**
Some of the waves in this group show are literal, like Chris Gentile's spoof of the famous Hiroshige print of a cresting wave (here it's the curled-up corner of a carpet) or Reed Anderson's collage of shots from surfer magazines, pierced by lacy holes like bubbles in foaming spray. Other waves are implicit, as in Gwen Smith's photo of beachfront stairs at Encinitas, with the Pacific in the background. Through Feb. 16. (Jessica Murray, 210 N. 6th St. 718-384-9606.)

## PHOTOGRAPHY

**RICHARD CALDICOTT**
Mark Rothko's color fields come immediately to mind on first viewing these photographs of what turn out to be Tupperware containers and lids. The mundane is monumentalized in forty-by-fifty-inch prints that Caldicott, a British artist, makes by overlapping pictures of Tupperware fragments, enlarging them, and somehow transforming the layers of plastic into mysterious, graphically formal, luminous images. Through Feb. 28. (Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.)

**LEWIS WICKES HINE**
The quaintness of Hine's early-twentieth-century documentation of child labor—the show opens with images of young newsboys in tweed caps—becomes pathos pretty quickly, as the details of the kids' wretched toils become clear. Some of them shoot dice on the sidewalk; others stand barefoot and filthy, or stooped over worktables, or, as in the final photo here, one-armed, after a factory accident. Hine was a crusader, and his photographs are still powerful—remnants of a moment when the modern world was struggling to become moral, too. Through March 7. (Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. 718-222-4111.)

**RICHARD MISRACH**
After a decade spent photographing the depths of beauty in the landscape and the skies, Misrach has made a new series of deadpan and chilly studies of beaches and the sea. Lacking horizons or perspective, they are the opposite of Hiroshi Sugimoto's meditative photos of the same subject. The prints are large—the smallest are six by eight feet—and it



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is easy to be overwhelmed by their colors, and to be unsettled by their eerie voyeurism. Through Feb. 14. (Pace/MacGill, 534 W. 25th St. 212-759-7999.)

**KATHY SUDER**
A series of color-saturated pictures of boxers that owe more to Caravaggio than to *Sports Illustrated*. In one image, a boxer is laid out, perhaps knocked out, and the referee lurks in the corner of the frame; the foreshortened perspective leaves the boxer headless, his feet scrambled and his gloves touching as if in prayer. The chiaroscuro effect of these pictures—nary a fan can be seen in the background—forces you to concentrate on the bodies in the ring. Through March 13. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-627-3930.)

**"ONLY SKIN DEEP"**
This rambunctiously curated cross-section of nineteenth-century tintypes, vintage stereograms, recent videos, and works by important young artists tries to make sense of the messy intersection of race and photography. "Ethnographic studies" of American Indians are shown near photographs by Max Becher and Andrea Robbins of German families wearing war paint and Sioux headdresses; a panoramic photo of an "Americanization Pageant," taken in Milwaukee in 1919, is near a group of early Cindy Sherman images that show the photographer in blackface; the Brazilian artist Vik Muniz's large-scale picture of his ink drawing of Frederick Douglass hangs near "Ebony and Ivory," a beautiful, early nude study by F. Holland Day of a black man holding a small classical sculpture of a man with a spear. Through Feb. 29. (International Center of Photography, 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 212-857-0000. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 8, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

### *Short List*

**DIANE ARBUS**
Grey, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Through March 27.

**BRUCE DAVIDSON**
Leica/Hermès, 691 Madison Ave. 212-751-3181. Through Feb. 28.

**LORETTA LUX**
Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370. Through March 6.

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

**SOTHEBY'S**
Feb. 11 at 10:15 A.M.: Impressionist and modern art, with still-lifes, sketches of dandies and society women, and landscapes by, among others, Valtat, Vlaminck, and Modigliani. The reliable rabble-rouser Pablo Picasso is represented by "Deux Combattants," a primitivist vision of war in red felt-tip pen; the other standout is the Russian avant-gardist David Burliuk's "Vase of Flowers." ♦ Feb. 12 at 10 A.M. and 2: Modern and contemporary art (featuring works from the estate of Vera G. List), including such sybaritic selections as Suzanne Valadon's bathing scene "Nu S'Épongeant le Dos" and Jean Lurçat's posterior view of the male form, "Nu Fond Vert." (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

**CHRISTIE'S**
Feb. 12 at 10 A.M. and 3: More than four hundred prints, in a varied assortment of styles ranging from Old Master works to realism, Impressionism, and minimalism, with postwar art in the morning and earlier works in the afternoon (including four of Goya's "Caprichos" etchings). ♦ Feb. 17 at 10 A.M. and 2: Photographs, including a group of seventy-one images by the Russian Constructivist Aleksandr Rodchenko taken between 1928 and 1932 for the proposed book "Two Moscows." The photos, gathered here from several collections, were meant to document daily life in the "New Moscow": May Day, sports parades, street cleaning, giant cauldrons bubbling in factory kitchens, and several charming shots of children. Considered too "formalist" by the authorities, the photos were condemned, and so the book was scrapped. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

**SWANN**
Feb. 17 at 6:30: A hundred photographs, featuring artistic works by Frantisek Drtikol and Eliot Porter and classic urban scenes by Lewis W. Hine. ♦ Feb. 19 at 10:30 A.M.: Medical books, including first and second editions (from 1543 and 1555) of Andreas Vesalius's landmark anatomy text "De Humanis Corporis."(104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

## CLASSICAL MUSIC
## OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**
Plácido Domingo, busy on the podium of late, returns to the Met stage to sing Ghermann (one of his signature roles) in Tchaikovsky's **"The Queen of Spades."** The distinguished cast includes Katarina Dalayman, Elena Zaremba, Felicity Palmer, Nikolai Putilin, and Vladimir Chernov; Vladimir Jurowski conducts. (Adrianne Pieczonka replaces Dalayman on Feb. 21; Dmitri Hvorostovsky, replacing Chernov, joins the cast on Feb. 24.) (Feb. 11, Feb. 17, and Feb. 24 at 8, Feb. 14 at 1:30, and Feb. 21 at 8:15.) ♦ Maria Guleghina takes the title role in a revival of **"Tosca,"** which also features Franco Farina and Samuel Ramey; John Fiore. (Feb. 12 at 7:30.) ♦ With Cynthia Lawrence replacing Guleghina. (Feb. 19 and Feb. 23 at 8.) ♦ The Met's revival of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of **"L'Italiana in Algeri"** shows every sign of being a happy affair, with such promising Rossinians as Olga Borodina, Juan Diego Flórez, Earle Patriarco, Ferruccio Furlanetto, and Lyubov Petrova singing their roles at the house for the

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first time; James Levine. (Feb. 13 and Feb. 20 at 8 and Feb. 16 at 7:30.) ♦ The richly idiomatic singing of such Russian-opera stars as Irina Mishura, Sergej Larin, Sergei Leiferkus, and Vladimir Matorin is perhaps the best reason to see this revival of August Everding's semi-grand production of **"Boris Godunov."** At the center of it all is James Morris, whose growly tone and deliberate stage presence make his portrayal of Boris all the more poignant; Semyon Bychkov. (Feb. 14 at 7:45. This is the final performance.) ♦ Valery Gergiev is back to conduct two final performances of **"Stravinsky,"** the all-singing, all-dancing triple bill that includes "Le Sacre du Printemps," "Le Rossignol," and "Oedipus Rex"; Olga Trifonova, Stephanie Blythe, Barry Banks, Clifton Forbis, and Phillip Ens are among the many featured singers (along with Philip Bosco, the Speaker in "Oedipus"). (Feb. 18 at 8 and Feb. 21 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

**GOTHAM CHAMBER OPERA**
After a year away, Neal Goren's Henry Street Chamber Opera—which won wide acclaim as the most stylish of the city's small-scale companies—returns with the American première of **"The Black Widow"** (1935), by the gifted Swiss composer Heinrich Sutermeister, a protégé of Orff. The mezzo-soprano Beth Clayton sings the lead; Goren conducts. (Harry de Jur Playhouse, 466 Grand St. 212-279-4200. Feb. 12 and Feb. 14 at 8.)

**AMATO OPERA**
New York's beloved pocket opera company mounts a new production of Offenbach's **"Tales of Hoffmann,"** sung in French, at their legendary little theatre in the East Village. The run begins with a Valentine's Day gala. (Feb. 14 at 7, Feb. 15 and Feb. 22 at 2:30, and Feb. 21 at 7:30.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**
The underrated young German pianist Lars Vogt—an artist as alive to structure as to song—gets his shot at a Philharmonic début, playing Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor; Lorin Maazel, never afraid to work on a big canvas, concludes the concert with three chunks of Wagner excerpts (including the "Prelude and Liebestod," from "Tristan und Isolde"). (Feb. 12 and Feb. 17 at 7:30, Feb. 13 at 11 A.M., and Feb. 14 at 8.) ♦ Antonio Pappano, the young American-trained conductor in his second year as the music director at Covent Garden, is noted for the Italianate sweep of his operatic performances—but what can he do in the concert hall? Philharmonic audiences will get a chance to find out as he makes his début with the orchestra in a program that begins jauntily with Haydn's seldom heard "Philosopher" Symphony and Poulenc's Concerto for Two Pianos (featuring Katia and Marielle Labèque) and concludes with the profound gloom and manic cheer of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony. (Feb. 19 and Feb. 24 at 7:30, Feb. 20 at 2, and Feb. 21 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

**CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA**
Last season's Carnegie Hall performances of the renowned ensemble and its new music director, Franz Welser-Möst, were less than successful; this year, Pierre Boulez, an old friend whose precision on the podium is second to none, leads the orchestra in two ambitious programs. Feb. 11 at 8: Marc-André Dalbavie has a position in France not unlike Aaron Jay Kernis's here; he's a popular forty-something composer who has taken what he needs from the modernist school (for him, the concept of "spectral" composition, which concerns the manipulation of sound in the concert space) while embracing a Romantic imperative to communicate with audiences. Boulez conducts the New York première of his "Concertate il Suono" in a concert that also features music by Messiaen and Ravel ("Oiseaux Exotiques" and the Piano Concerto in G Major, respectively, both with Mitsuko Uchida) along with Bartók's orchestral whirlwind, "The Miraculous Mandarin." ♦ Feb. 12 at 8: Music by Mahler (the Adagio from the Tenth Symphony) and Wagner (Act II of "Parsifal," featuring Thomas Moser, Michelle DeYoung, and Eike Wilm Schulte in the leading roles). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

*Lars Vogt plays with the Philharmonic on Feb. 12-14 and Feb. 17.*

PHILIP BURKE

**ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA**
Herbert Blomstedt, a probing interpreter whose sober style should suit the eminent Dutch orchestra's conservative tradition, brings two all-symphonic programs to Carnegie Hall. Feb. 14 at 8: A study in contrasts—the Fourth Symphonies of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. ♦ Feb. 15 at 2: Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony and the Symphony No. 1 in C Minor by Brahms. (212-247-7800.)

**ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**
Daniele Gatti, the ensemble's appealing music director, conducts two programs. Feb. 15 at 3: Symphonies by Prokofiev, Mozart (No. 40 in G Minor), and Tchaikovsky (the Fifth). ♦ Feb. 18 at 8: The formidable Garrick Ohlsson is the soloist in an all-Brahms concert (including the Piano Concerto No. 2 and the Symphony No. 1). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

**VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**
Seiji Ozawa, who conducts this storied ensemble's parent orchestra at the Vienna State Opera, stewards them in their annual visit to Carnegie Hall. Feb. 18 at 8: Strauss's "Don Juan," Mahler's "Rückert Lieder" (with Thomas Hampson), and Schoenberg's "Pelleas und Melisande," one of the most challenging and turbulent of late-Romantic works. ♦ Feb. 19 at 8: Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony and the Symphony No. 2 in C Minor by Bruckner, an off-the-beaten-path selection (with a wonderful slow movement) from the composer's dreadnought catalogue. ♦ Feb. 20 at 8: Webern's luminous orchestration of the Ricercare from Bach's "Musical Offering" opens a concert that includes music by Berg ("Three Fragments from 'Wozzeck'") and Beethoven (the Symphony No. 3, "Eroica"). (212-247-7800.)

**PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA**
Lorraine Hunt Lieberson lends her radiant and communicative voice to the mezzo-soprano solos of Mahler's Third Symphony, in a performance (with the American Boychoir and the women of the Philadelphia Singers) conducted by Christoph Eschenbach. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 23 at 8.)

**CECILIA BARTOLI AND THE ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT**
The charismatic mezzo-soprano sings music by Salieri. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 24 at 8.)

## RECITALS

**REBEL: MUSIC BY HEINRICH BIBER**
The daring little ensemble of strings and keyboard offers a program devoted exclusively to music by the Czech Baroque master (and virtuoso violinist), in Gwendolyn Toth's lunchtime early-music series at St. Francis of Assisi Church. (135 W. 31st St. Feb. 12 at 1:15. No tickets required.)

**BARGEMUSIC**
Feb. 12-13 at 7:30: The pianist Steven Beck, the violinists Mark Peskanov and Colin Jacobsen, and other musicians play piano quartets by Dohnányi and Shostakovich. ♦ Feb. 21 at 7:30 and Feb. 22 at 4: Dvořák's Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major provides the climax of a concert by the violinist Peter Zazofsky, the violist Jesse Levine, the cellist Ole Akahoshi, and the pianist Doris Stevenson. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For complete listings, see www.bargemusic.org.)

**STEVEN KOVACEVICH**
In his only New York recital of the season, the veteran pianist performs Beethoven's Sonata in A-Flat Major, Op. 110, and the Bagatelles, Op. 126. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Feb. 13 at 8.)

**MILLER THEATRE**
Feb. 12 at 8: Michael Gordon's music betrays just as much influence from rock and minimalism as does that of the other Bang on a Can composers, but its virulent anger and dreamy lyricism give it a power all its own. Ensemble Resonanz, a group drawn from the ranks of the excellent German Youth Philharmonic, plays the American première of "Weather," a work for sixteen strings. ♦ Feb. 19 at 8: The pianist Blair McMillen attacks the sparkling yet mysterious music of Berio (including "Sequenza IV") and Scelsi. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.)

**CHAMBER MUSIC AT ZANKEL HALL**
Feb. 13 and Feb. 14 at 7:30: In two separate programs, the superb Takács Quartet performs not only great Hungarian quartets by Kodály and Bartók but also some of the rich and varied folk music that inspired both composers. The folk ensemble Muzsikás joins them on Feb. 13. ♦ Feb. 22 at 5: James Levine leads his Met Chamber Ensemble in music by Strauss ("Metamorphosen"), Harbison, Wuorinen, and Poulenc ("Le Bal Masqué," with the baritone Earle Patriarco). (212-247-7800.)

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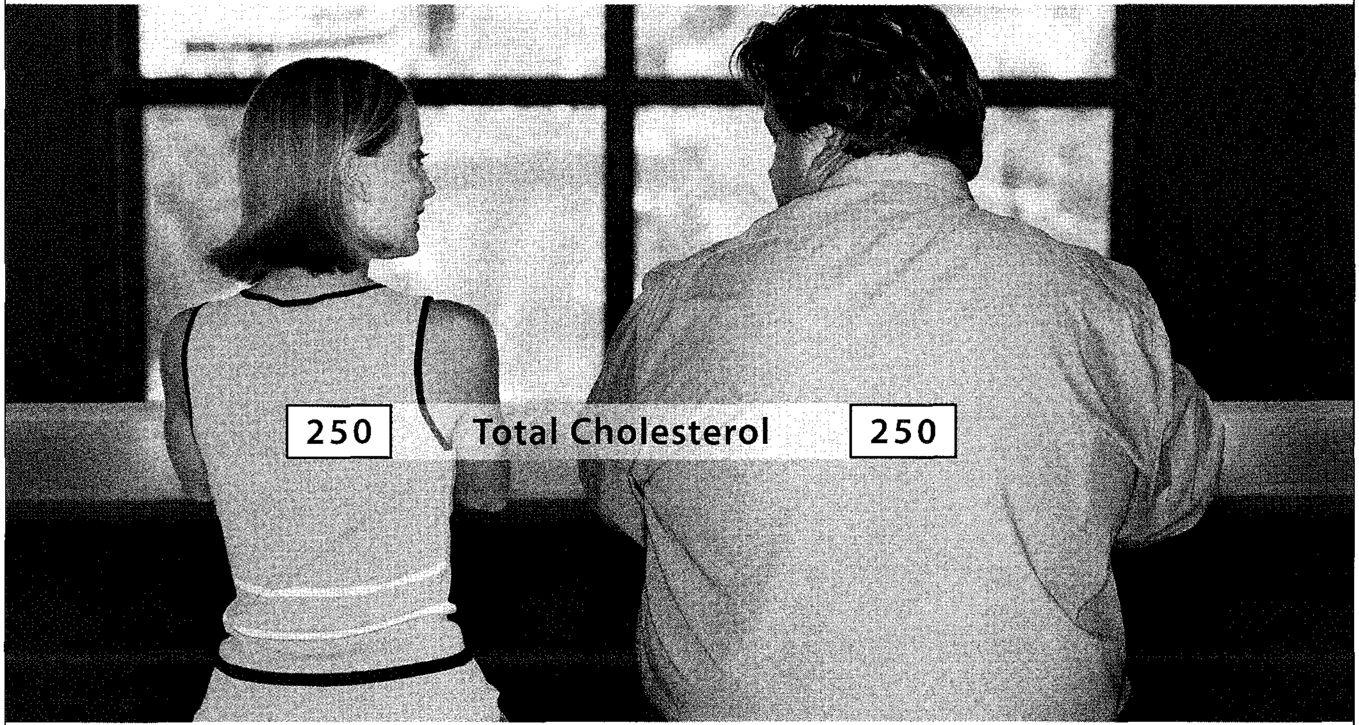

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*Please see additional important information on next page.*

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**WARNINGS: Liver Dysfunction** — HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, like some other lipid-lowering therapies, have been associated with biochemical abnormalities of liver function. **Persistent elevations (>3 times the upper limit of normal [ULN] occurring on 2 or more occasions) in serum transaminases occurred in 0.7% of patients who received atorvastatin in clinical trials. The incidence of these abnormalities was 0.2%, 0.2%, 0.6%, and 2.3% for 10, 20, 40, and 80 mg, respectively.** One patient in clinical trials developed jaundice. Increases in liver function tests (LFT) in other patients were not associated with jaundice or other clinical signs or symptoms. Upon dose reduction, drug interruption, or discontinuation, transaminase levels returned to or near pretreatment levels without sequelae. Eighteen of 30 patients with persistent LFT elevations continued treatment with a reduced dose of atorvastatin. **It is recommended that liver function tests be performed prior to and at 12 weeks following both the initiation of therapy and any elevation of dose, and periodically (eg, semiannually) thereafter.** Liver enzyme changes generally occur in the first 3 months of treatment with atorvastatin. Patients who develop increased transaminase levels should be monitored until the abnormalities resolve. Should an increase in ALT or AST of >3 times ULN persist, reduction of dose or withdrawal of atorvastatin is recommended. Atorvastatin should be used with caution in patients who consume substantial quantities of alcohol and/or have a history of liver disease. Active liver disease or unexplained persistent transaminase elevations are contraindications to the use of atorvastatin (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). **Skeletal Muscle — Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure secondary to myoglobinuria have been reported with atorvastatin and with other drugs in this class.** Uncomplicated myalgia has been reported in atorvastatin-treated patients (see ADVERSE REACTIONS). Myopathy, defined as muscle aches or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in creatine phosphokinase (CPK) values >10 times ULN, should be considered in any patient with diffuse myalgias, muscle tenderness or weakness, and/or marked elevation of CPK. Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. Atorvastatin therapy should be discontinued if markedly elevated CPK levels occur or myopathy is diagnosed or suspected. The risk of myopathy during treatment with drugs in this class is increased with concurrent administration of cyclosporine, fibric acid derivatives, erythromycin, niacin, or azole antifungals. Physicians considering combined therapy with atorvastatin and fibric acid derivatives, erythromycin, immunosuppressive drugs, azole antifungals, or lipid-lowering doses of niacin should carefully weigh the potential benefits and risks and should carefully monitor patients for any signs or symptoms of muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and during any periods of upward dosage titration of either drug. Periodic creatine phosphokinase (CPK) determinations may be considered in such situations, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe myopathy. **Atorvastatin therapy should be temporarily withheld or discontinued in any patient with an acute, serious condition suggestive of a myopathy or having a risk factor predisposing to the development of renal failure secondary to rhabdomyolysis (eg, severe acute infection, hypotension, major surgery, trauma, severe metabolic, endocrine and electrolyte disorders, and uncontrolled seizures).**

**PRECAUTIONS: General** — Before instituting therapy with atorvastatin, an attempt should be made to control hypercholesterolemia with appropriate diet, exercise, and weight reduction in obese patients, and to treat other underlying medical problems (see INDICATIONS AND USAGE in full prescribing information). **Information for Patients** — Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. **Drug Interactions** — The risk of myopathy during treatment with drugs of this class is increased with concurrent administration of cyclosporine, fibric acid derivatives, niacin (nicotinic acid), erythromycin, azole antifungals (see WARNINGS, Skeletal Muscle). ***Antacid:*** When atorvastatin and Maalox® TC suspension were coadministered, plasma concentrations of atorvastatin decreased approximately 35%. However, LDL-C reduction was not altered. ***Antipyrine:*** Because atorvastatin does not affect the pharmacokinetics of antipyrine, interactions with other drugs metabolized via the same cytochrome isozymes are not expected. ***Colestipol:*** Plasma concentrations of atorvastatin decreased approximately 25% when colestipol and atorvastatin were coadministered. However, LDL-C reduction was greater when atorvastatin and colestipol were coadministered than when either drug was given alone. ***Cimetidine:*** Atorvastatin plasma concentrations and LDL-C reduction were not altered by coadministration of cimetidine. ***Digoxin:*** When multiple doses of atorvastatin and digoxin were coadministered, steady-state plasma digoxin concentrations increased by approximately 20%. Patients taking digoxin should be monitored appropriately. ***Erythromycin:*** In healthy individuals, plasma concentrations of atorvastatin increased approximately 40% with coadministration of atorvastatin and erythromycin, a known inhibitor of cytochrome P450 3A4 (see WARNINGS, Skeletal Muscle). ***Oral Contraceptives:*** Coadministration of atorvastatin and an oral contraceptive increased AUC values for norethindrone and ethinyl estradiol by approximately 30% and 20%. These increases should be considered when selecting an oral contraceptive for a woman taking atorvastatin. ***Warfarin:*** Atorvastatin had no clinically significant effect on prothrombin time when administered to patients receiving chronic warfarin treatment. **Endocrine Function** — HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors interfere with cholesterol synthesis and theoretically might blunt adrenal and/or gonadal steroid production. Clinical studies have shown that atorvastatin does not reduce basal plasma cortisol concentration or impair adrenal reserve. The effects of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors on male fertility have not been studied in adequate numbers of patients. The effects, if any, on the pituitary-gonadal axis in premenopausal women are unknown. Caution should be exercised if an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor is administered concomitantly with drugs that may decrease the levels or activity of endogenous steroid hormones, such as ketoconazole, spironolactone, and cimetidine. **CNS Toxicity** — Brain hemorrhage was seen in a female dog treated for 3 months at 120 mg/kg/day. Brain hemorrhage and optic nerve vacuolation were seen in another female dog that was sacrificed in moribund condition after 11 weeks of escalating doses up to 280 mg/kg/day. The 120 mg/kg dose resulted in a systemic exposure approximately 16 times the human plasma area-under-the-curve (AUC, 0-24 hours) based on the maximum human dose of 80 mg/day. A single tonic convulsion was seen in each of 2 male dogs (one treated at 10 mg/kg/day and one at 120 mg/kg/day) in a 2-year study. No CNS lesions have been observed in mice after chronic treatment for up to 2 years at doses up to 400 mg/kg/day or in rats at doses up to 100 mg/kg/day. These doses were 6 to 11 times (mouse) and 8 to 16 times (rat) the human AUC (0-24) based on the maximum recommended human dose of 80 mg/day. CNS vascular lesions, characterized by perivascular hemorrhages, edema, and mononuclear cell infiltration of perivascular spaces, have been observed in dogs treated with other members of this class. A chemically similar drug in this class produced optic nerve degeneration (Wallerian degeneration of retinogeniculate fibers) in clinically normal dogs in a dose-dependent fashion at a dose that produced plasma drug levels about 30 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking the highest recommended dose. **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility** — In a 2-year carcinogenicity study in rats at dose levels of 10, 30, and 100 mg/kg/day, 2 rare tumors were found in muscle in high-dose females: in one, there was a rhabdomyosarcoma and, in another, there was a fibrosarcoma. This dose represents a plasma AUC (0-24) value of approximately 16 times the mean human plasma drug exposure after an 80 mg oral dose. A 2-year carcinogenicity study in mice given 100, 200, or 400 mg/kg/day resulted in a significant increase in liver adenomas in high-dose males and liver carcinomas in high-dose females. These findings occurred at plasma AUC (0-24) values of approximately 6 times the mean human plasma drug exposure after an 80 mg oral dose. *In vitro*, atorvastatin was not mutagenic or clastogenic in the following tests with and without metabolic activation: the Ames test with *Salmonella typhimurium* and *Escherichia coli*, the HGPRT forward mutation assay in Chinese hamster lung cells, and the chromosomal aberration assay in Chinese hamster lung cells. Atorvastatin was negative in the *in vivo* mouse micronucleus test. Studies in rats performed at doses up to 175 mg/kg (15 times the human exposure) produced no changes in fertility. There was aplasia and aspermia in the epididymis of 2 of 10 rats treated with 100 mg/kg/day of atorvastatin for 3 months (16 times the human AUC at the 80 mg dose); testis weights were significantly lower at 30 and 100 mg/kg and epididymal weight was lower at 100 mg/kg. Male rats given 100 mg/kg/day for 11 weeks prior to mating had decreased sperm motility, spermatid head concentration, and increased abnormal sperm. Atorvastatin caused no adverse effects on semen parameters, or reproductive organ histopathology in dogs given doses of 10, 40, or 120 mg/kg for two years. **Pregnancy — Pregnancy Category X: See CONTRAINDICATIONS.** Safety in pregnant women has not been established. Atorvastatin crosses the rat placenta and reaches a level in fetal liver equivalent to that of maternal plasma. Atorvastatin was not teratogenic in rats at doses up to 300 mg/kg/day or in rabbits at doses up to 100 mg/kg/day. These doses resulted in multiples of about 30 times (rat) or 20 times (rabbit) the human exposure based on surface area (mg/m$^2$). In a study in rats given 20, 100, or 225 mg/kg/day, from gestation day 7 through to lactation day 21 (weaning), there was decreased pup survival at birth, neonate, weaning, and maturity in pups of mothers dosed with 225 mg/kg/day. Body weight was decreased on days 4 and 21 in pups of mothers dosed at 100 mg/kg/day; pup body weight was decreased at birth and at days 4, 21, and 91 at 225 mg/kg/day. Pup development was delayed (rotorod performance at 100 mg/kg/day and acoustic startle at 225 mg/kg/day; pinnae detachment and eye opening at 225 mg/kg/day). These doses correspond to 6 times (100 mg/kg) and 22 times (225 mg/kg) the human AUC at 80 mg/day. Rare reports of congenital anomalies have been received following intrauterine exposure to HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors. There has been one report of severe congenital bony deformity, tracheo-esophageal fistula, and anal atresia (VATER association) in a baby born to a woman who took lovastatin with dextroamphetamine sulfate during the first trimester of pregnancy. LIPITOR should be administered to women of child-bearing potential only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards. If the woman becomes pregnant while taking LIPITOR, it should be discontinued and the patient advised again as to the potential hazards to the fetus. **Nursing Mothers** — Nursing rat pups had plasma and liver drug levels of 50% and 40%, respectively, of that in their mother's milk. Because of the potential for adverse reactions in nursing infants, women taking LIPITOR should not breast-feed (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). **Pediatric Use** — Safety and effectiveness in patients 10-17 years of age with heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia have been evaluated in a controlled clinical trial of 6 months duration in adolescent boys and postmenarchal girls. Patients treated with LIPITOR had an adverse experience profile generally similar to that of patients treated with placebo, the most common adverse experiences observed in both groups, regardless of causality assessment, were infections. ***Doses greater than 20 mg have not been studied in this patient population.*** *In this limited* controlled study, there was no detectable effect on growth or sexual maturation in boys or on menstrual cycle length in girls (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Clinical Studies section in full prescribing information; ADVERSE REACTIONS, Pediatric Patients (ages 10-17 years); and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION, Heterozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia in Pediatric Patients (10-17 years of age) in full prescribing information. Adolescent females should be counseled on appropriate contraceptive methods while on LIPITOR therapy (see CONTRAINDICATIONS and PRECAUTIONS, Pregnancy). **LIPITOR has not been studied in controlled clinical trials involving pre-pubertal patients or patients younger than 10 years of age.** Clinical efficacy with doses up to 80 mg/day for 1 year have been evaluated in an uncontrolled study of patients with homozygous FH including 8 pediatric patients (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, *Clinical Studies: Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia* in full prescribing information). **Geriatric Use** — The safety and efficacy of atorvastatin (10-80 mg) in the geriatric population (≥65 years of age) was evaluated in the ACCESS study. In this 54-week open-label trial 1,958 patients initiated therapy with atorvastatin 10 mg. Of these, 835 were elderly (≥65 years) and 1,123 were non-elderly. The mean change in LDL-C from baseline after 6 weeks of treatment with atorvastatin 10 mg was -38.2% in the elderly patients versus -34.6% in the non-elderly group. The rates of discontinuation due to adverse events were similar between the two age groups. There were no differences in clinically relevant laboratory abnormalities between the age groups.

**ADVERSE REACTIONS:** LIPITOR is generally well-tolerated. Adverse reactions have usually been mild and transient. In controlled clinical studies of 2502 patients, <2% of patients were discontinued due to adverse experiences attributable to atorvastatin. The most frequent adverse events thought to be related to atorvastatin were constipation, flatulence, dyspepsia, and abdominal pain. **Clinical Adverse Experiences** — Adverse experiences reported in ≥2% of patients in placebo-controlled clinical studies of atorvastatin, regardless of causality assessment, are shown in the following table.

**Adverse Events in Placebo-Controlled Studies (% of Patients)**

| BODY SYSTEM<br>Adverse Event | Placebo<br>N = 270 | Atorvastatin 10 mg<br>N = 863 | Atorvastatin 20 mg<br>N = 36 | Atorvastatin 40 mg<br>N = 79 | Atorvastatin 80 mg<br>N = 94 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BODY AS A WHOLE** | | | | | |
| Infection | 10.0 | 10.3 | 2.8 | 10.1 | 7.4 |
| Headache | 7.0 | 5.4 | 16.7 | 2.5 | 6.4 |
| Accidental Injury | 3.7 | 4.2 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 3.2 |
| Flu Syndrome | 1.9 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 3.2 |
| Abdominal Pain | 0.7 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 2.1 |
| Back Pain | 3.0 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 1.1 |
| Allergic Reaction | 2.6 | 0.9 | 2.8 | 1.3 | 0.0 |
| Asthenia | 1.9 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 0.0 |
| **DIGESTIVE SYSTEM** | | | | | |
| Constipation | 1.8 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 1.1 |
| Diarrhea | 1.5 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 5.3 |
| Dyspepsia | 4.1 | 2.3 | 2.8 | 1.3 | 2.1 |
| Flatulence | 3.3 | 2.1 | 2.8 | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| **RESPIRATORY SYSTEM** | | | | | |
| Sinusitis | 2.6 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 6.4 |
| Pharyngitis | 1.5 | 2.5 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 2.1 |
| **SKIN AND APPENDAGES** | | | | | |
| Rash | 0.7 | 3.9 | 2.8 | 3.8 | 1.1 |
| **MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM** | | | | | |
| Arthralgia | 1.5 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 5.1 | 0.0 |
| Myalgia | 1.1 | 3.2 | 5.6 | 1.3 | 0.0 |

The following adverse events were reported, regardless of causality assessment in patients treated with atorvastatin in clinical trials. The events in italics occurred in ≥2% of patients and the events in plain type occurred in <2% of patients.

***Body as a Whole:*** *Chest pain*, face edema, fever, neck rigidity, malaise, photosensitivity reaction, generalized edema. ***Digestive System:*** *Nausea*, gastroenteritis, liver function tests abnormal, colitis, vomiting, gastritis, dry mouth, rectal hemorrhage, esophagitis, eructation, glossitis, mouth ulceration, anorexia, increased appetite, stomatitis, biliary pain, cheilitis, duodenal ulcer, dysphagia, enteritis, melena, gum hemorrhage, stomach ulcer, tenesmus, ulcerative stomatitis, hepatitis, pancreatitis, cholestatic jaundice. ***Respiratory System:*** *Bronchitis, rhinitis*, pneumonia, dyspnea, asthma, epistaxis. ***Nervous System:*** *Insomnia, dizziness*, paresthesia, somnolence, amnesia, abnormal dreams, libido decreased, emotional lability, incoordination, peripheral neuropathy, torticollis, facial paralysis, hyperkinesia, depression, hypesthesia, hypertonia. ***Musculoskeletal System:*** *Arthritis*, leg cramps, bursitis, tenosynovitis, myasthenia, tendinous contracture, myositis. ***Skin and Appendages:*** Pruritus, contact dermatitis, alopecia, dry skin, sweating, acne, urticaria, eczema, seborrhea, skin ulcer. ***Urogenital System:*** *Urinary tract infection*, urinary frequency, cystitis, hematuria, impotence, dysuria, kidney calculus, nocturia, epididymitis, fibrocystic breast, vaginal hemorrhage, albuminuria, breast enlargement, metrorrhagia, nephritis, urinary incontinence, urinary retention, urinary urgency, abnormal ejaculation, uterine hemorrhage. ***Special Senses:*** Amblyopia, tinnitus, dry eyes, refraction disorder, eye hemorrhage, deafness, glaucoma, parosmia, taste loss, taste perversion. ***Cardiovascular System:*** Palpitation, vasodilatation, syncope, migraine, postural hypotension, phlebitis, arrhythmia, angina pectoris, hypertension. ***Metabolic and Nutritional Disorders:*** *Peripheral edema*, hyperglycemia, creatine phosphokinase increased, gout, weight gain, hypoglycemia. ***Hemic and Lymphatic System:*** Ecchymosis, anemia, lymphadenopathy, thrombocytopenia, petechia. **Postintroduction Reports** — Adverse events associated with LIPITOR therapy reported since market introduction, that are not listed above, regardless of causality assessment, include the following: anaphylaxis, angioneurotic edema, bullous rashes (including erythema multiforme, Stevens-Johnson syndrome, and toxic epidermal necrolysis), and rhabdomyolysis. **Pediatric Patients (ages 10-17 years)** In a 26-week controlled study in boys and postmenarchal girls (n=140), the safety and tolerability profile of LIPITOR 10 to 20 mg daily was generally similar to that of placebo (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, *Clinical Studies section* in full prescribing information and PRECAUTIONS, *Pediatric Use*).

**OVERDOSAGE:** There is no specific treatment for atorvastatin overdosage. In the event of an overdose, the patient should be treated symptomatically, and supportive measures instituted as required. Due to extensive drug binding to plasma proteins, hemodialysis is not expected to significantly enhance atorvastatin clearance.

**Please see full prescribing information for additional information about LIPITOR.**

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**CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS**
Feb. 16 at 8: The pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet plays his specialities—music by Chopin, Debussy, and Satie. ♦ Feb. 17 at 8: Renée Fleming, Anne-Sofie von Otter, Matthew Polenzani, and René Pape haven't spent equal time in the house of Schubert—but they'll all sing with James Levine, who accompanies them in a program devoted to songs by the Viennese master. (212-247-7800.)

**CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER**
Feb. 18 at 8: Joan Panetti, a pianist and composer who has been a mainstay of Yale's School of Music for twenty-five years, takes the spotlight at the Society's latest concert, which features the première of her Roethke-inspired piano quintet, "In a Dark Time, the Eye Begins to See" (along with music by Mozart and Beethoven, with the Tokyo String Quartet). ♦ Feb. 20 at 8: It's Ransom Wilson's turn in "Flute Focus," a program in which he plays a selection of new and old works (including Bach, Prokofiev, and premières by Woolf and Kernis) on three instruments made exclusively for him. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)

**"ZELENKA AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL"**
An inelegant title for what promises to be a very persuasive pair of programs, in which the matchless oboist Heinz Holliger (with friends) mixes the Baroque composer's complete chamber sonatas with modern selections by Carter, Dutilleux, and the late Isang Yun. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 21 at 8 and Feb. 22 at 3.)

**BARBARA BONNEY**
Wolfgang Rieger accompanies the charming lyric soprano in a program combining songs by Berlioz ("Les Nuits d'Été") and Liszt with several favorite selections from the world of Viennese operetta. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Feb. 22 at 2.)

**"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: "CHANT WARS"**
Sequentia and Dialogos, two of Europe's leading early-music ensembles (led by Benjamin Bagby and Katarina Livljanic, respectively), come together for a choral battle of the bands that will illuminate the rift between ancient chant and the styles that emerged during the time of Charlemagne. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Feb. 22 at 4.)

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## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**VALENTINE'S DAY EVENTS**
Feb. 11 at 7:30: Chris Hampton (of uffish.com), Choire Sicha (of gawker.com), and other local Web writers step out from behind their monitors and relate in person the "Worst. Sex. Ever." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.) ♦ Feb. 14 at 5: The artist and curator Robin Kahn celebrates the publication of her latest book, "Sexual Lovemaking for Dummies." (Printed Matter, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-925-0325.) ♦ Feb. 14 at 8: The editor Paul Collins hosts a reading of selections from forgotten and out-of-print romance novels, with the writers Tom Bissell, Rachel Cohen, Todd Pruzan, and Dan Kennedy doing the honors. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324.) ♦ Feb. 15 at 2: Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, a professor of philosophy at the University of Haifa, talks about his latest book, "Love Online." (Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.)

**READINGS**
Feb. 11 at 8: Paul Auster reads from his newly published book "Collected Poems." The author Laird Hunt will also be on hand. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Feb. 16 at 8:15: Mark Strand and Albert Goldbarth offer selections from their verse. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ Feb. 21 at 1:30: The journalist Randy Kennedy reads from his new work, "Subwayland: Adventures in the World Beneath New York." (New York Transit Museum, corner of Boerum Pl. and Schermerhorn St., Brooklyn. 718-694-1867.)

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## MOVIES OPENING

**AGAINST THE ROPES**
Meg Ryan plays the pioneering female boxing manager Jackie Kallen, in a bio-pic directed by Charles S. Dutton. With Omar Epps as the fighter she discovers. Opening Feb. 20.

**THE BIG ANIMAL**
A drama written by Krzysztof Kieslowski in which a town adopts a camel that was left behind by the circus. Directed by Jerzy Stuhr, who also plays one of the leads. In Polish. Opening Feb. 20. (Anthology Film Archives.)

**A BOY'S LIFE**
Rory Kennedy directed this documentary about an intelligent and disturbed boy living with his grandmother in rural Mississippi. Opening Feb. 13. (Cinema Classics.)

**CHARLIE: THE LIFE AND ART OF CHARLES CHAPLIN**
Richard Schickel's documentary about the actor and director, which includes interviews with Woody Allen and Johnny Depp. Opening Feb. 13. (Sunshine Cinema.)

**THE CODE**
A policier about a newly released criminal (Samuel Le Bihan) trying to stay straight. Directed and co-written by Manuel Boursinhac. In French. Opening Feb. 13. (Union Square.)

**CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE DRAMA QUEEN**
Lindsay Lohan plays a New York City girl coping with her family's move to suburban New Jersey, in a comedy directed by Sara Sugarman. Opening Feb. 20.

**EUROTRIP**
A teen comedy about four American students on the loose in Europe. Directed by Jeff Schaffer. Opening Feb. 20.

**50 FIRST DATES**
In Peter Segal's comedy, Drew Barrymore plays a woman with short-term-memory loss, and Adam Sandler is the man who tries to woo her anew every time they meet. Opening Feb. 13.

**KITCHEN STORIES**
Bent Hamer's comedic drama is set in a remote Scandinavian village in which a group of researchers are studying the domestic habits of unmarried men. In Norwegian and Swedish. Opening Feb. 20. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**LOST BOYS OF SUDAN**
A documentary about two Sudanese teen-agers who are resettled in Kansas City and Houston. Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk directed. Opening Feb. 18. (Film Forum.)

**THE LOST SKELETON OF CADAVRA**
Larry Blamire wrote, directed, and stars in this affectionate homage to sci-fi and horror movies from the nineteen-fifties. Opening Feb. 20. (Sunshine Cinema.)

**LOVE OBJECT**
A lonely technical writer gets involved with an anatomically correct sex doll, in a horror thriller written and directed by Robert Parigi. Opening Feb. 13. (Angelika Film Center.)

**MONSIEUR IBRAHIM**
Omar Sharif plays an elderly Muslim who befriends a young Jewish boy (Pierre Boulanger) in a drama set in nineteen-sixties Paris. Written and directed by François Dupeyron. In French. Opening Feb. 13. (Paris.)

**ROBOT STORIES**
Four science-fiction shorts, written and directed by Greg Pak, involving robot babies, android workers, and the scanning of human memory into computers. Opening Feb. 13. (Cinema Village.)

**THE SEAGULL'S LAUGHTER**
A mysterious and beautiful woman shakes up her Icelandic village when she returns from America, in a drama set in the nineteen-fifties. Ágúst Gudmundsson wrote and directed. In Icelandic. Opening Feb. 13. (Quad Cinema.)

**SECRET THINGS**
Jean-Claude Brisseau directed this drama about two women, former strip-club workers who seduce rich and powerful men. In French. Opening Feb. 20. (Quad Cinema.)

**TEKNOLUST**
Tilda Swinton plays four roles in this science-fiction film, in which she's a biogeneticist who creates three replicas of herself. Also with Jeremy Davies. Directed by Lynn Hershman Leeson. Opening Feb. 20. (Village East Cinema.)

**WELCOME TO MOOSEPORT**
A comedy with Gene Hackman as a popular ex-President who runs for mayor of a small Maine town, only to be aggressively opposed by the proprietor of the local hardware store (Ray Romano). With Marcia Gay Harden and Maura Tierney. Opening Feb. 20.

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## FILM NOTES

**AILEEN: LIFE AND DEATH OF A SERIAL KILLER**
Unhappy people in documentaries often come off as affectless, distant, and without focus. Aileen Wuornos, the Florida prostitute and murderer who was executed in 2002, is just the opposite. In Nick Broomfield's film, much of it shot just weeks before the execution, Wuornos is overfocussed: her eyes pop out of her head, and, even though she's shackled to a chair, every part of her body is wired and moving. She pulls down her mouth and tosses her hair, assaulting the camera with her sledgehammer ego, her suffering, her brutality, and her belief in her own honesty. You can't dismiss her as a psychotic—she may, in fact, be clinically insane—because she also has patches of lucidity and power, and she's unnerving as hell.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/26/04.) (Sunshine Cinema.)

**ALONG CAME POLLY**
Even by the standards of romantic comedy, the pairing of Ben Stiller and Jennifer Aniston feels like the product of an artificial intelligence. Stiller, employing his paranoid persona, plays a risk analyzer who sees E. coli in a bowl of bar nuts. Aniston, in a cautious performance, is a catering employee with commitment problems; we know she's a free spirit because she wears knit hats. Yet, despite the absence of chemistry, the two stars occasionally connect for a good gag, and the writer-director John Hamburg sets up some very funny moments, especially for the naturally squeamish. Hank Azaria, last seen as the editor Michael Kelly in "Shattered Glass," is unrecognizable as a nudist French scuba instructor, and Philip Seymour Hoffman does a good bit as a basketball spaz.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

**BEFORE THE REVOLUTION**
A sweepingly romantic movie about a young man's rebellion against bourgeois life and his disillusion with Communism, set in Parma and written and directed by Bernardo Bertolucci at the astonishing age of twenty-two. He captures what has rarely been seen on the screen—the extravagance and poetry of youthful ardor. The hero, Fabrizio, discovers that he is not single-minded enough to be a revolutionary, that he is too deeply involved in the beauty of life as it is before the revolution. He has "a nostalgia for the present." (The characters of Fabrizio and his young aunt Gina are loosely derived from Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma.") Originally released in 1964, this was Bertolucci's second feature. In Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Moving Image; Feb. 14.)

**THE BIG BOUNCE**
Owen Wilson develops a nice, easy rhythm as a raffish minor criminal hanging out in Hawaii in this genial botch, based on an Elmore Leonard novel. It's one of those everyone-screws-everyone stories (an allegory for Hollywood, perhaps?), but with a peculiar island ambience—people leave their doors unlocked, and strangers walk in, steal things, make love, and walk out. The incoherent plot is punctuated by giant waves crested with surfers. Morgan Freeman, Gary Sinise, Willie Nelson, and Harry Dean Stanton can be seen hanging around the edges, rotting in the sun and drinking. With Sara Foster, who gives a slatternly performance as a slattern. Directed by George Armitage, who became ill during the production and was unable to pull the damn thing together.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Cinema 3, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

**BLIND SHAFT**
An underground film from China, in more ways than one. The writer-director Li Yang shot his vérité footage inside illegal Chinese mines and without government approval. The movie is grimy, crude, and affecting, in both its locations (as bleak as you might expect) and its plot. Two criminal drifters, Song and Tang, have developed a scam: they befriend one of the many uprooted men looking for work and tell him that they know of a job at a rural mine, but that the man must pretend to be their brother in order to be hired. Once they go down the shaft with their new relative, they stage his accidental death, and, as the dead man's nearest relations, collect payoff money from the mine's owners. The scam turns on the family connection, and it's this element that leads to an exquisite and escalating moral tension when they choose a scholarly young boy as their next mark. Song develops a misguided affection for his "nephew," taking him to a prostitute, getting him drunk. But will he kill him? In Mandarin.—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

**THE COOLER**
This tough and sentimental genre film feels like a B movie from 1956 with a dirty mouth. Bernie Lootz (William H. Macy) has such terrible luck that a Vegas casino owner named Shelly (Alec Baldwin) uses him as a "cooler": no sooner does Bernie join a crap game than anyone with a hot hand immediately begins to lose. But then Bernie falls in love with a young cocktail waitress, Natalie (Maria Bello), and his magic suddenly shifts: now everyone around him wins, which is big trouble for Bernie. The writer-director Wayne Kramer keeps the color scheme of this Runyonesque fable harsh and bright—the night tones of Vegas, seen from its underside. The movie is set in sordid casinos and the kind of green-walled motel room in which fornication takes place in the adjoining room at a colossal volume. The crud and the petty desperation of "The Cooler" are immensely enjoyable as atmosphere, and the actors attack their roles with relish.—*D.D.* (1/12/04) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

**CRIMSON GOLD**
Jafar Panahi, the Iranian director who made "The White Balloon" and "The Circle," addresses a subject that has, until now, received scandalously little attention: the life of a pizza deliveryman. Hussein (Hussein Emadeddin) is as doughy a figure as his profession would suggest; he waddles through Tehran, or glides with unhurried dignity on his scooter. What he observes on his rounds could have amounted to a mere ragbag of details—a Westernized playboy with a swimming pool in his apartment, cops staking out a loud party—yet it comes across as the portrait of a city both humming with human traffic and quietly

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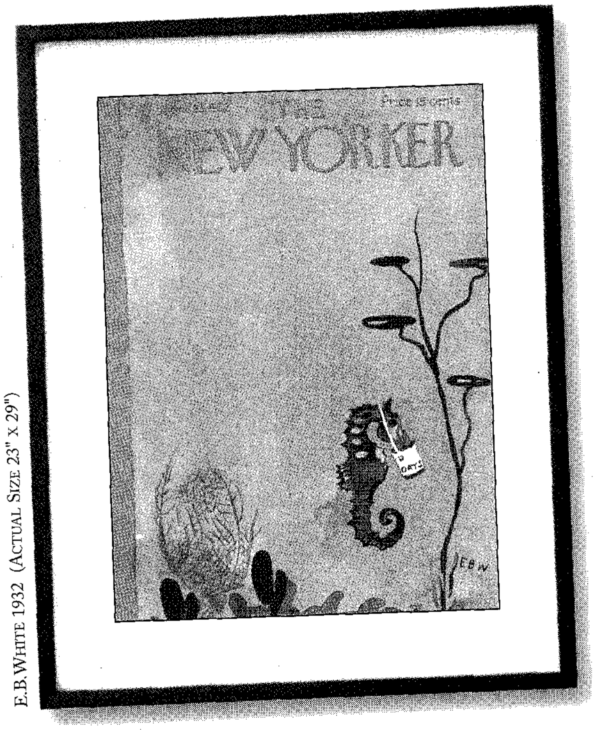
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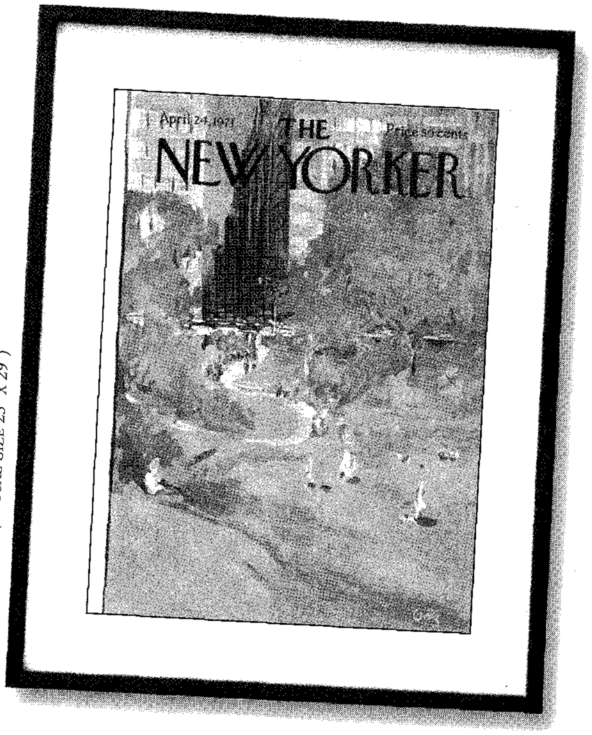
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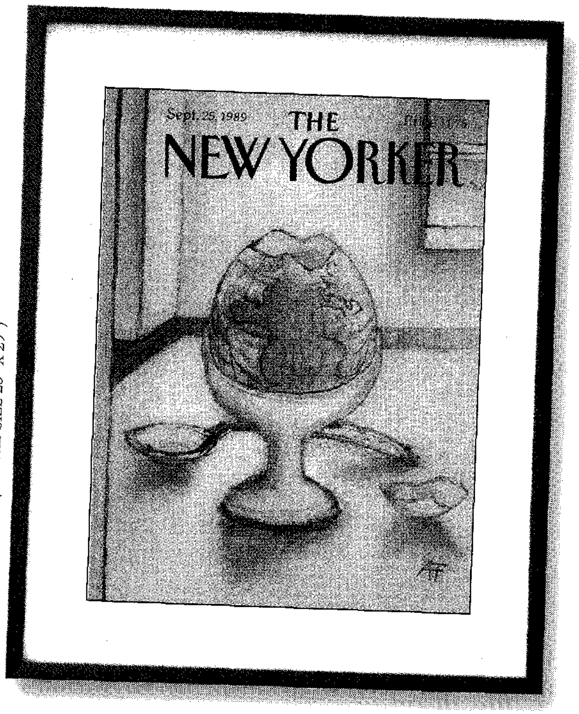
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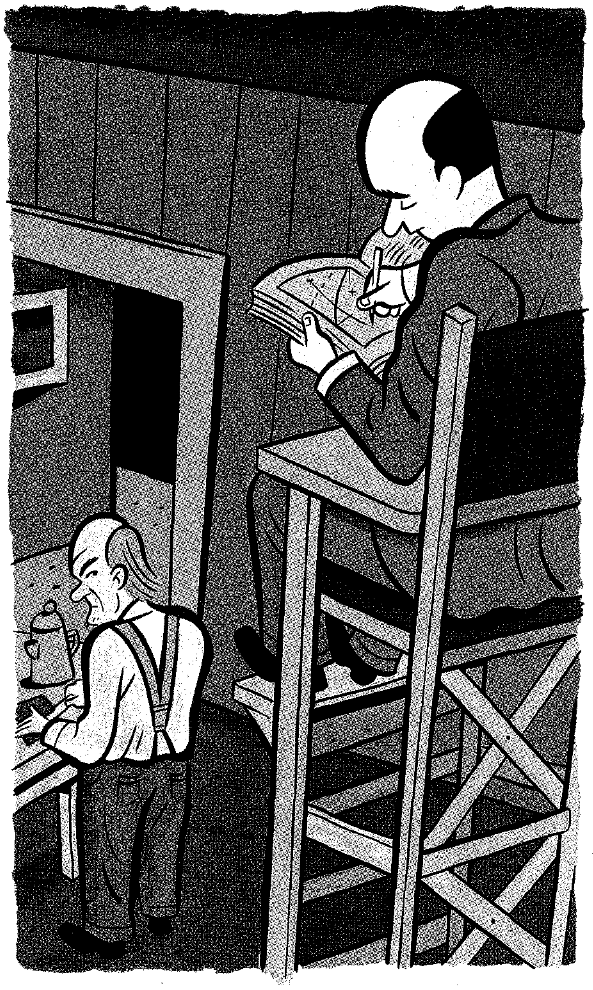
besieged by the state. The hero's own story has the luckless tinge that we associate with Turgenev or Maupassant: the pinch of frustration, plus the wrong move that lunges into calamity. In Farsi.—*Anthony Lane* (1/19/04) (Quad Cinema.)

**THE DREAMERS**
An American college student named Matthew (Michael Pitt) is in Paris in 1968 and soaking up as many movies as he can. When the government cracks down on the state-sponsored Cinémathèque Française, he gets caught up in the demonstrations and meets a red-bereted beauty named Isabelle (Eva Green) and her twin brother, Théo (Louis Garrel), who has the looks of a debauched medieval priest. The director, Bernardo Bertolucci, loves to create a hothouse. In "Last Tango in Paris," he used enclosed space to explore the limits of romantic desire, but here the conceit is a different kind of exuberance: cinephilia. Isabelle, Théo, and Matthew argue endlessly about movies and see themselves as characters playing roles. As the three embark on increasingly risqué sexual games, Bertolucci longs to re-create the moment when film, politics, and sex mutually reinforced each other as the preoccupations of youth. It's a saddening nostalgia, and the movie, despite its attempt to shock us with incest and perversities, has an air of inconsequence about it. The three aren't making a revolution in this hothouse, they're making a listless blue movie. In French and English.—*D.D.* (2/9/04) (Beekman, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.)



*Bent Hamer's "Kitchen Stories" opens February 20.*

SETH

**IN AMERICA**
The tale of an Irish family that travels to New York in search of a better life, or, at any rate, a life. Johnny (Paddy Considine), his wife, Sarah (Samantha Morton), and their daughters, Christy (Sarah Bolger) and Ariel (Emma Bolger), settle near Hell's Kitchen and wrestle, as you would expect, with outlandish local customs such as air-conditioners and Halloween. Despite the title, the director, Jim Sheridan, is gripped less by the country in which his characters find themselves than by their own hope and anguish: there was a third child, a boy, who died before they came to the States. The movie has a busy intensity but lacks the rooted confidence of Sheridan's Irish work, as seen in "My Left Foot" and "In the Name of the Father." What ties it down, if anything, is the performance of Sarah Bolger—ten years old when the picture was made, but the sanest and saddest person on the block.—*A.L.* (12/1/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

**THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS**
Orson Welles's second film has greater depth than "Citizen Kane," though it doesn't have the driving force that might have held it together. Working from the Booth Tarkington novel, Welles achieved some great sequences of family life—intense, harrowing squabbles. Tim Holt plays the arrogant, mother-fixated son who falls from the American aristocracy to the working class; Dolores Costello, the fragile blond beauty of the silent era, is his soft, yielding mother; and, as the nervous, bitter hysterical-spinster aunt, Agnes Moorehead is uncannily powerful, in a hyperrealistic way. (It's a classic performance.) With the amazing old Richard Bennett as the family patriarch, Joseph Cotten, Anne Baxter, and Ray Collins. The film wasn't completed in the form that Welles originally intended, and there are pictorial effects that seem scaled for a much fuller work, but even in this truncated form it's amazing and memorable. Originally released in 1945.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Feb. 20-24.)

**MONSTER**
To play Aileen Wuornos, the real-life prostitute and serial killer who was executed in 2002, Charlize Theron put on thirty pounds and endured an hour and a half of attention each shooting day from the makeup artist Toni G. What's remarkable about the film is not just Theron's transformation into a half-mad, beaten-up prostitute, but the disciplined performance that she gives. The actress twitches and shrugs as if her tendons were directed by will alone. She's telling the world to kiss off, yet, inevitably, she's reduced to sticking out her thumb on the highway in search of a paying customer. When a scuzzy client abuses her, she snaps, empties a revolver into his chest, and lets out a war whoop of triumph. The moment is truly frightening. Theron's ferocity pushes the material over the top, but her tenderness—the flashes of gentleness and vulnerability—retrieves it from tabloid exploitation and camp horror. With Christina Ricci as the petulant lower-middle-class girl who becomes Wuornos's lover. Written and directed by Patty Jenkins and shot in that bedraggled kingdom of chaos Central Florida.—*D.D.* (1/26/04) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

**TOUCHING THE VOID**
Kevin Macdonald's new film is a dismaying documentary account of what happened on the side of a mountain in 1985. Two young British climbers, Joe Simpson and Simon Yates, ascended the west face of Siula Grande, in the Peruvian Andes, and then began their descent. Simpson slipped and injured his leg, then fell again, this time off the brink of a ridge. He was hanging from the end of a rope; at the other end, sliding fast, was Yates, who cut the rope to save himself. You come out of the movie arguing hotly—as Macdonald wants you to do—about the rights and wrongs of that dire moment, and musing on the fact that Simpson survived his ordeal. The two men tell their story with a sang-froid verging on the comical, intercut with a dramatic reconstruction of the climb itself. The cinematography, all vertiginous horror and beauty, is by Mike Eley; it leaves us with a mad inkling of what drives a mountaineer, as well as a determination to stay, at all costs, on the level.—*A.L.* (1/19/04) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

**THE TRILOGY**
Three films by the Belgian director Lucas Belvaux, which form a linked chain. All are set in the same place, Grenoble, each features a similar roster of characters, and, somewhere within every picture, the same story is being told. But that is not a recipe for monotony; the hero of one film will fade into semi-obscurity in the next, and vice versa, as if we were losing touch or making fresh contact with an old friend. Then, there are the transformations of tone: the first movie ("On the Run") is hard and swift, the second ("An Amazing Couple") sunny and farcical, and the third ("After Life") a gruelling tale of drug addiction and the limits of marital love. By rights, the whole enterprise should smack of a clever trick, yet you take your leave of the trilogy—which is best viewed in one fell swoop—with a kind of exhausted regret, half-wanting to know what other permutations could be found for these difficult lives. In French.—*A.L.* (2/2/04) (Angelika Film Center.)

**THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG**
Jacques Demy's musical romance about both first love and adult love is the rare movie that fully honors both. Everyone probably remembers something about "Umbrellas": that the dialogue is sung, or that its songs became international hits (one under the title "I Will Wait for You"), or that Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo, as a salesgirl in her widowed mother's umbrella shop and a garage mechanic who lives with his aged aunt, are a surpassingly graceful couple. The mother (Anne Vernon) is also a wonderful character, worldly wise yet not sour; and after Castelnuovo is called up for service in Algeria, the globe-trotting Parisian who courts Deneuve turns out to be a hell of a guy, just as the gal Castelnuovo catches on the rebound becomes his rock of sanity. Demy uses his exquisite camera movements to follow the flux of characters who burst with ardor. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Feb. 13-19.)

**UNPRECEDENTED: THE 2000 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**
Remember Florida's political shame? Richard Ray Perez and Joan Sekler's corrosive documentary about the contest between Al Gore and George Bush for the Sunshine State will hold you in a state of appalled enthrallment. They cover topics that went as underreported as the votes throughout the state were undercounted. The most hair-raising, perhaps, is a purge of supposed felons from the voter rolls that denied political rights to thousands of innocent citizens, most of whom were African-American. The moviemakers also take the time to complete stories that got short shrift from print and broadcast journalists—in a swift, devastating coup, they identify the D.C.-based Republican congressional aides and other G.O.P. staffers in the famous shot of "rioters" disrupting the Miami-Dade recount outside the doors of the canvassing board. The movie equally indicts high-level Democrats for making decisions based on political calculus rather than on principle, and the mainstream media for denying the outcome of their own research—such as the conclusion that if all eligible votes were counted, including 175,000 unread ballots, Gore would be President.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Feb. 21.)

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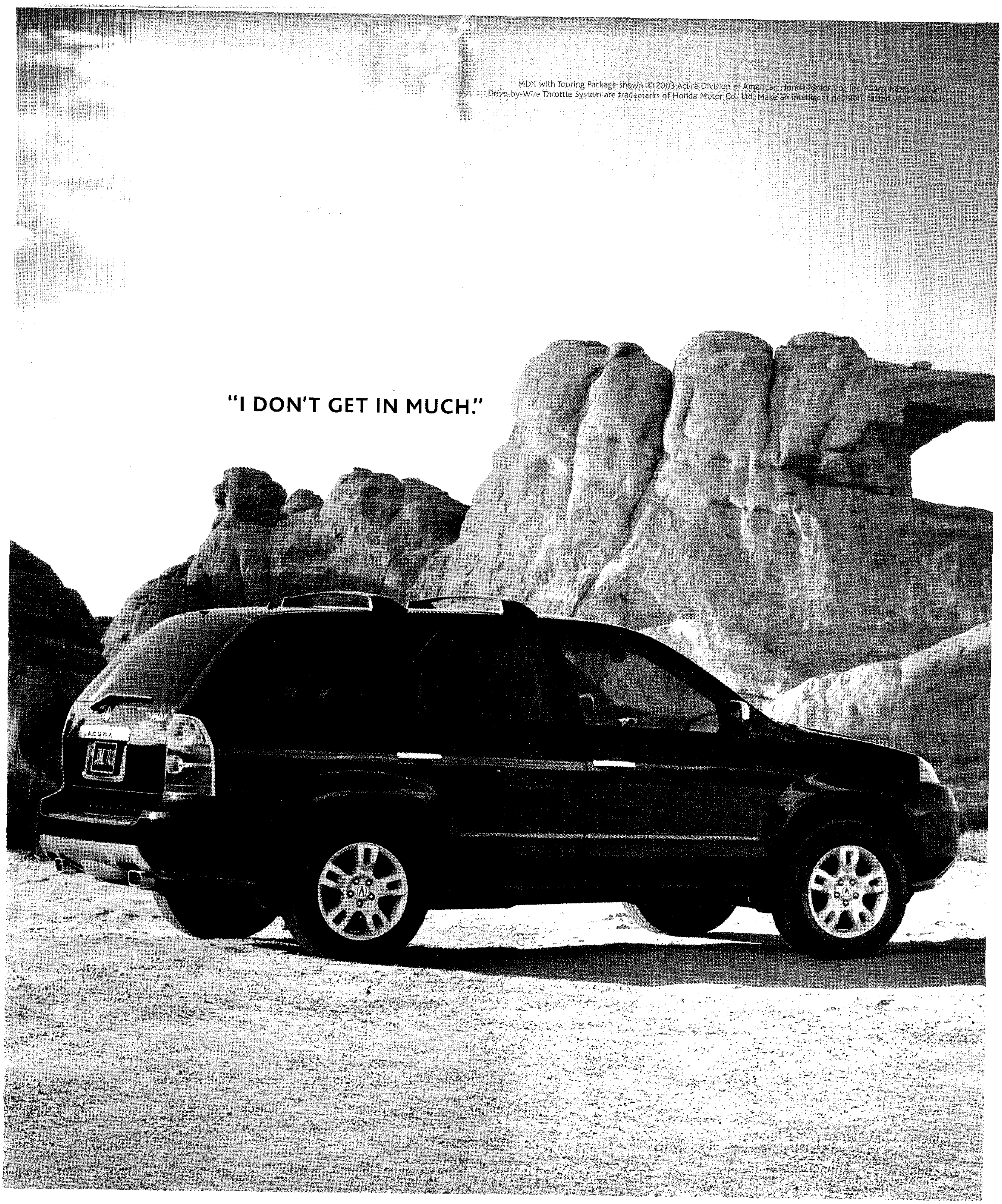
## ALSO PLAYING

**BARBERSHOP 2: BACK IN BUSINESS**
Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.



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**THE FOG OF WAR**
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
**OSAMA**
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.
**THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE** (12/1/03)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

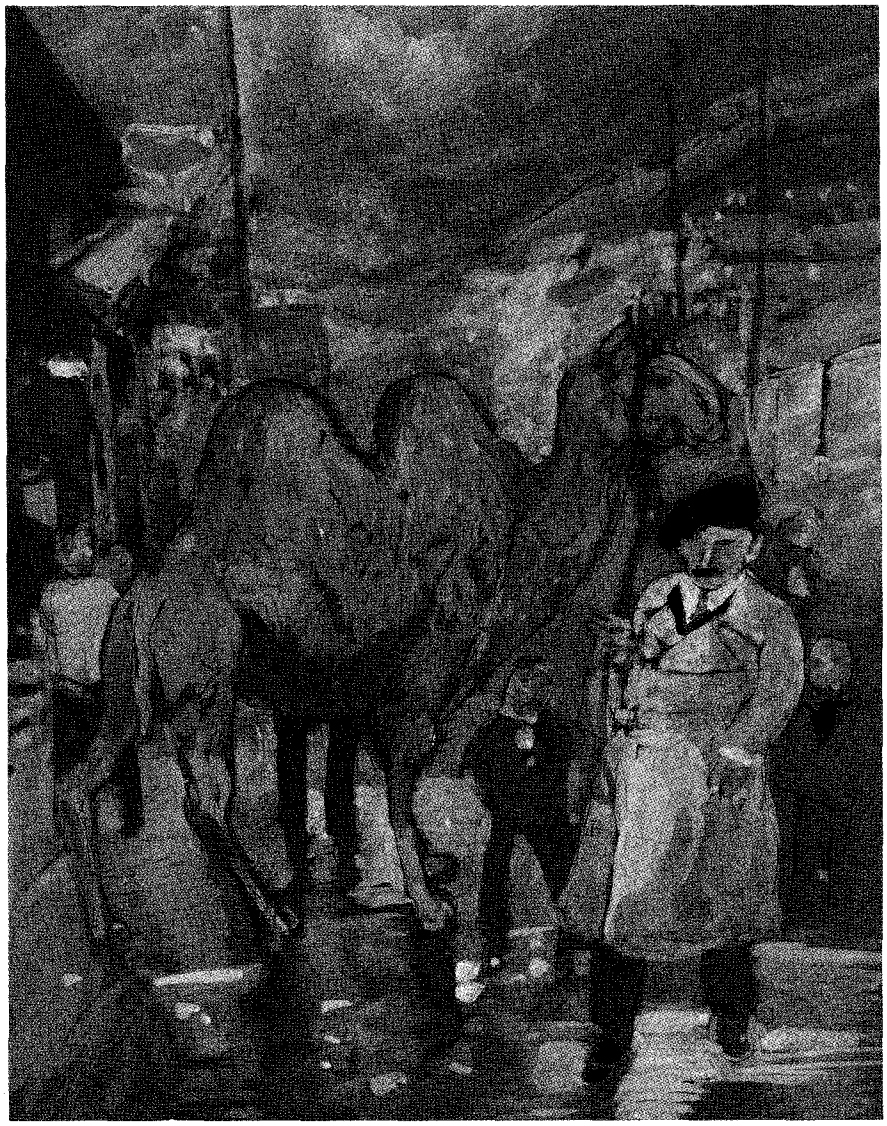
*Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.*

**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St.
**Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at Broadway.
**Battery Park 16,** West St. at Vesey St.
**Beekman,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd St.
**Chelsea West,** 333 W. 23rd St.
**Cinema Classics,** 332 E. 11th St. (212-677-6309).
**Cinemas 1, 2, and 3,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema Village,** 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
**East 86th Street Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**84th Street Sixplex,** Broadway at 84th St.
**Empire 25,** on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th St.
**First & 62nd Cinemas,** 400 E. 62nd St.
**42nd Street E Walk,** 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
**Kips Bay Theatre,** Second Ave. at 32nd St.
**Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,** Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
**Lincoln Square,** Broadway at 68th St.
**Metro Twin,** Broadway at 99th St.
**New York Twin,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**19th Street East 6,** Broadway at 19th St.
**Orpheum VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Paris,** 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th St.
**72nd Street East,** Third Ave. at 71st St.
**64th and 2nd,** Second Ave. at 64th St.
**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd St.
**Sunshine Cinema,** 139-143 E. Houston St.
**Sutton 1 and 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.
**34th Street Theatre,** 312 W. 34th St.
**Union Square,** Broadway at 13th St.
**Village East Cinemas,** Second Ave. at 12th St.
**Village Theatre VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.
**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th St.

## REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.*

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Cinema Tropical." Feb. 13 at 7:30: "Under California—the Limit of Time" (1998, Carlos Bolado; in Spanish). ♦ Starting Feb. 14: A Bernardo Bertolucci retrospective. All films are in Italian. Feb. 14 at 2: "The Grim Reaper" (1962). ♦ Feb. 14 at 4: "Before the Revolution" (†). ♦ Feb. 14-15 at 6:30: "The Conformist" (1971). ♦ Feb. 15 at 2: "The Oil Road" (1967). ♦ Feb. 15 at 4:30: "Partner" (1968). ♦ Feb. 21 at 2: Short films by Bertolucci (1967-2002). ♦ Feb. 21 at 4: "La Luna" (1979). ♦ Feb. 22 at 1: "1900" (1977). ♦ Feb. 21-22 at 6:30: "The Spider's Stratagem" (1970). ♦ Winter-recess special screenings. Feb. 16-20 at 2: "The School of Rock" (2003, Richard Linklater). ♦ Greek-cinema showcase. Feb. 20 at 7:30: "Still Looking for Morphine" (2001, Yannis Fagras; in Greek).
**ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES**
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Return engagement. Feb. 12-13 at 7 and 9:30 and Feb. 14-15 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Millennium Mambo" (2001, Hou Hsiao-Hsien; in Mandarin). ♦ Essential cinema. Feb. 14 at 5:30: Stan Brakhage shorts. ♦ Feb. 15 at 5: "23rd Psalm Branch" (1966, Brakhage). ♦ Feb. 21 at 5:30: "Scenes from Under Childhood" (1969-70, Brakhage). ♦ Feb. 22 at 6:30: "The Weir Falcon Saga" (1970, Brakhage). ♦ Rescheduled from the blackout. Feb. 19 at 7: "My Friend Ivan Lapshin" (1971/85, Alexei Gherman; in Russian). ♦ Feb. 19 at 9:15: "Come and See" (1985, Elem Klimov; in Russian). ♦ Films by Michele Smith. Feb. 20 at 8: "Regarding Penelope's Wake" (2002). ♦ Feb. 21 at 8:30: "Like All Bad Men He Looks Attractive" (2003). ♦ A Jerzy Stuhr retrospective. All films are in Polish. Feb. 21 at 5: "List of Lovers" (1995). ♦ Feb. 21 at 9: "Love Stories" (1997). ♦ Feb. 22 at 5: "The Weather for Tomorrow" (2003). ♦ Feb. 22 at 9: "A Week in the Life of a Man" (1999). ♦ Special presentation. Feb. 22 at 8:15: "Material Excess" (2002-2003, Greg Biermann).
**BAM ROSE CINEMAS**
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Starting Feb. 20: The Best of the African Diaspora Film Festival. Feb. 20 at 4:30: "Tasuma" (2003, Daniel Kollo Sanou; in French). ♦ Feb. 20 at 6:50: "Afro-Punk: The Rock and Roll Nigger Experience" (2003, James Spooner). ♦ Feb. 20 and Feb. 23 at 9:30: "The Tracker" (2002, Rolf de Heer). ♦ Feb. 21-22 at 2: "Coming to England" (2003, Floella Benjamin). ♦ Feb. 21 at 3:30: "Borders" (2001, Mostefa Djadjam; in French). ♦ Feb. 21 at 5:45 and Feb. 24 at 9:10: "Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property" (2003, Charles Burnett). ♦ Feb. 21 at 7:15 and Feb. 23 at 4:30: "The Other World" (2001, Merzak Allouache; in French and Arabic). ♦ Feb. 21 at 9:30: "Unprecedented: The 2000 Presidential Election" (†). ♦ Feb. 22 at 3:30: "When the Spirits Dance Mambo" (2002, Marte Moreno Vega). ♦ Feb. 22 at 5:45 and Feb. 23 at 6:50: "Rage and Discipline" (2003, Brian Clyde). ♦ Feb. 22 at 9:10: "Tattoo Bar, a Passionate Love Story" (2000, Jol Sol; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 24 at 7:30: "Sisters in Cinema" (2003, Yvonne Welbon).
**FILM FORUM**
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Feb. 11-12 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Tenant" (1976, Roman Polanski). ♦ Feb. 13-19 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (†). ♦ Starting Feb. 20: An Orson Welles retrospective. Feb. 20-24 at 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, and 9:20: "The Magnificent Ambersons" (†).
**FLORENCE GOULD HALL**
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through March 30: A tribute to the French studio Pathé. Feb. 17 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Wooden Crosses" (1931, Raymond Bernard; in French). ♦ Feb. 24 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "La Romance de Paris" (1941, Jean Boyer; in French).
**GRAMERCY THEATRE**
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through Feb. 27: "Im Kwon-Taek: Master Korean Filmmaker." All films are in Korean. Feb. 12 at 2: "The Tae Baek Mountains" (1994). ♦ Feb. 12 at 5 and Feb. 15 at 3: "The Misty Village" (1982, Song Kil-Han). ♦ Feb. 13 at 2: "Chihwaseon" (2002). ♦ Feb. 13 at 4:15: "The Surrogate Woman" (1987). ♦ Feb. 14 at 6:30: "Mandala" (1981). ♦ Feb. 14 at 9: "Chunhyang" (2000). ♦ Feb. 16 at 8 and Feb. 19 at 2: "Adada" (1987). ♦ Feb. 19 at 8 and Feb. 22 at 7:15: "The General's Son" (1990). ♦ Feb. 20 at 4:15 and Feb. 21 at 9:15: "The Genealogy" (1978). ♦ Feb. 21 at 5: "Gilsodom" (1985). ♦ Feb. 21 at 7:



*At Anthology Film Archives, "The Big Animal," written by Krzysztof Kieslowski.*

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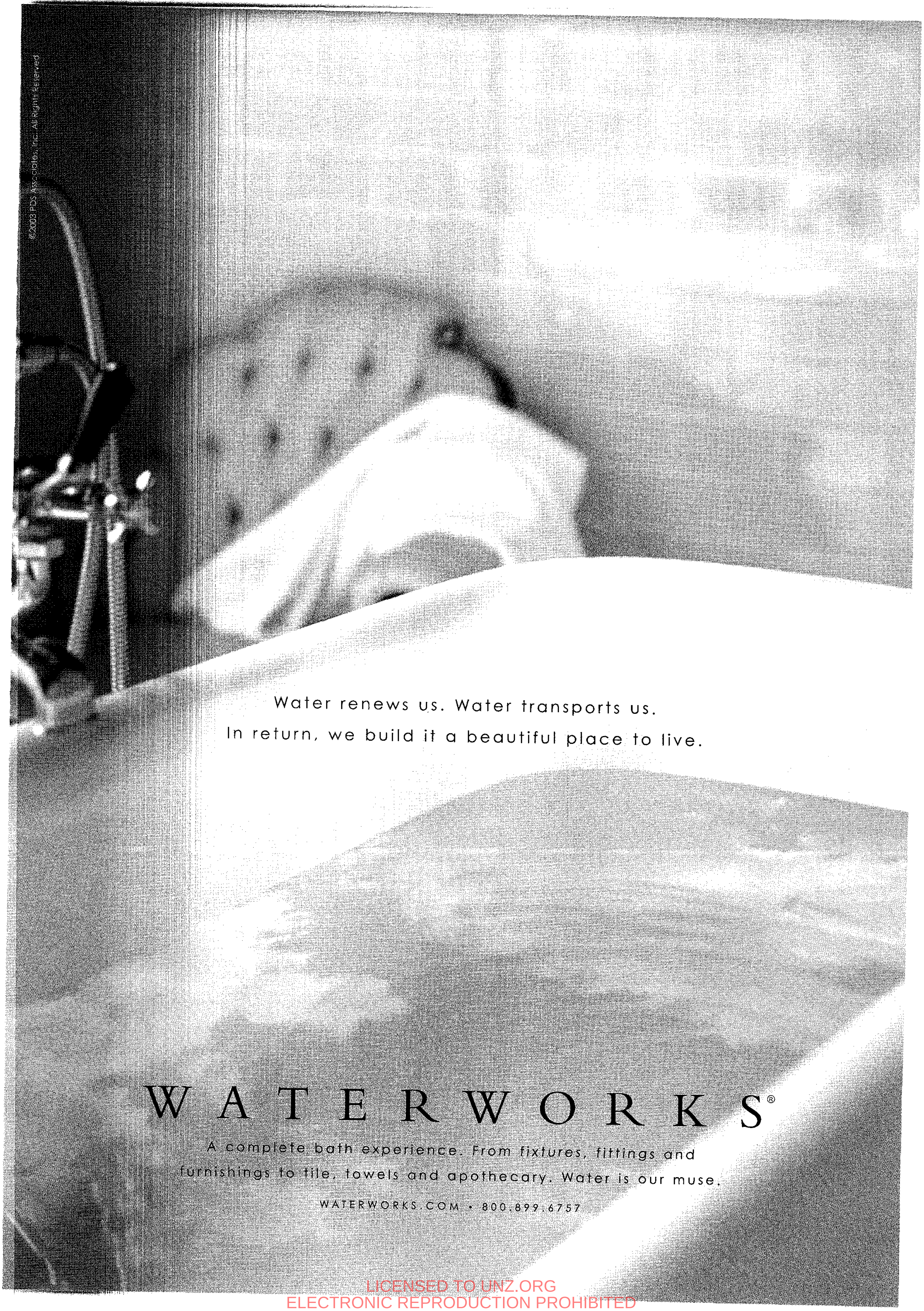

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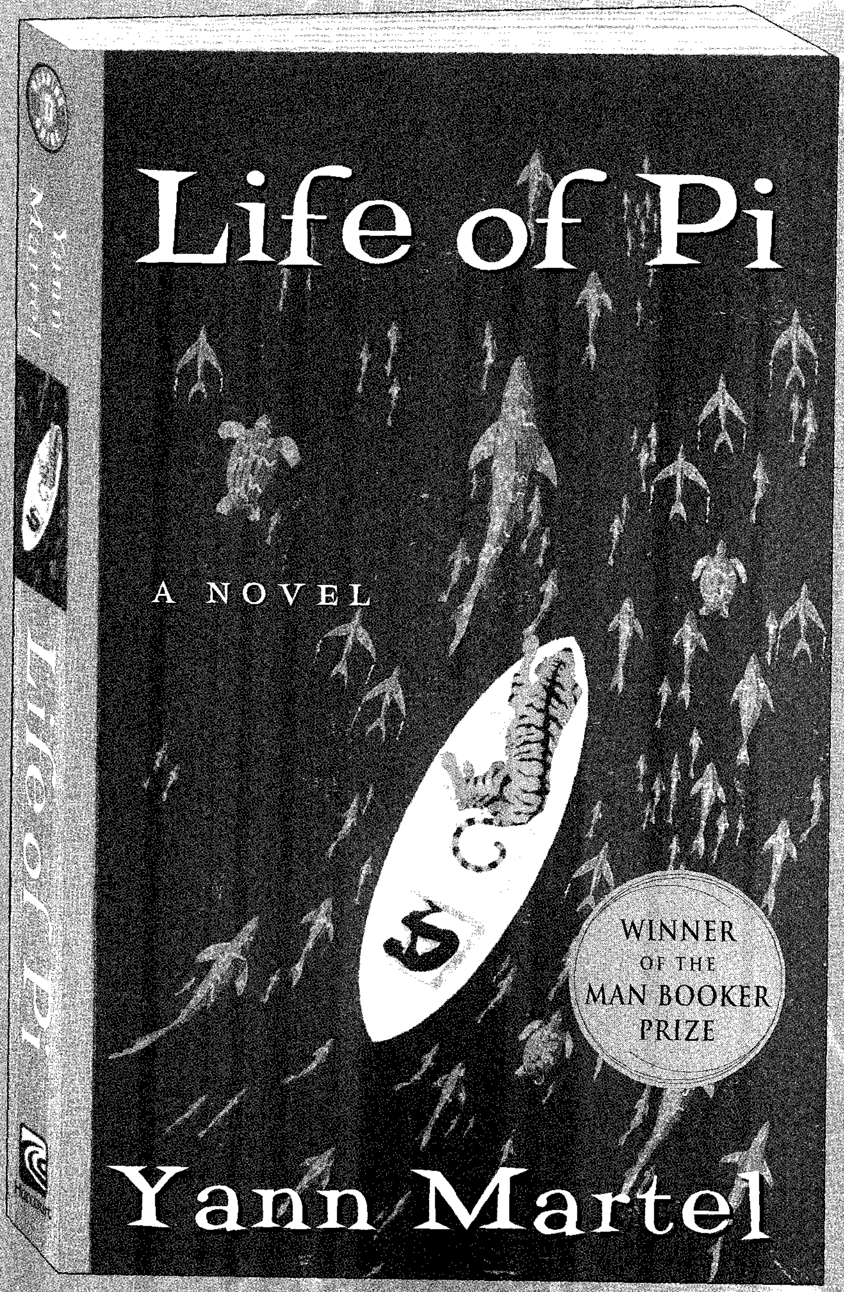

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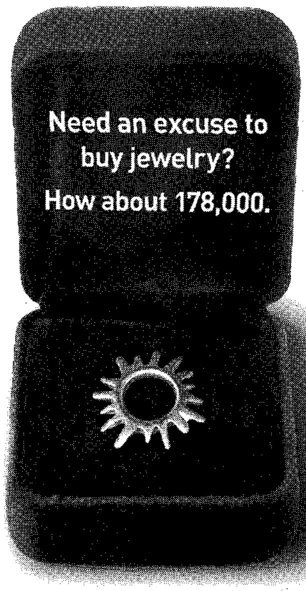
"Chakko" (1980). ♦ "China Now," recent work from Chinese media artists. Most films are in Mandarin. Feb. 12 at 7 and Feb. 14 at 3: "An Estranged Paradise" (1997-2002, Yang Fudong). ♦ Feb. 12 at 8:30 and Feb. 15 at 5: "Actor's Lines" (2002, Zhang Peili) and other shorts. ♦ Feb. 13 at 6:15 and Feb. 15 at 7: "Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest, Part I" (2003, Yang) and other shorts. ♦ Feb. 13 at 8:45 and Feb. 16 at 4: "Dance with Farm Workers" (2002, Wu Wenguang). ♦ Feb. 14 at 1 and Feb. 16 at 2: "Utopian Machine" (2002, Zhou Xiaohu) and other shorts. ♦ Through Feb. 27: "The Hidden God: Film and Faith." Feb. 14 at 4:45 and Feb. 16 at 6: "The Law" (1990, Idrissa Ouedraogo; in Mòoré). ♦ Feb. 15 at 1: "Rite of Spring" (1963, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese). ♦ Feb. 19 at 4:15 and Feb. 23 at 6: "The Devil Probably" (1977, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 6:15 and Feb. 21 at 1: "The Silence" (1963, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Feb. 20 at 2 and Feb. 22 at 5: "The Wind Will Carry Us" (1999, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ Feb. 21 at 3: "Bad Lieutenant" (1992, Abel Ferrara). ♦ "Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at 70." Feb. 20 at 6:30: "Every Man for Himself" (1980; in French). ♦ Feb. 20 at 8:30: "The Old Place" (1998; in French). ♦ Special event. Feb. 22 at 2: Oscar-nominated documentary shorts.

**SUNSHINE CINEMA**
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Feb. 13-15: "Pulp Fiction" (1994, Quentin Tarantino). ♦ Feb. 20-21: "Sleeper" (1973, Woody Allen).

**THALIA THEATRE**
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Feb. 14: "The Hilarious History of the World." Feb. 14 at 2: "Sleeper" (1973, Woody Allen). ♦ Feb. 14 at 3:45: "At War with the Army" (1950, Hal Walker). ♦ Feb. 14 at 6: "Taking Off" (1971, Milos Forman). ♦ Feb. 14 at 7:45: "Catch-22" (1970, Mike Nichols). ♦ Feb. 15 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Great Dictator" (1940, Charles Chaplin).

**WALTER READE THEATRE**
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Feb. 12: "History Lessons: The Films of Jerzy Kawalerowicz." All films are in Polish. Feb. 11 at 1 and 6:15: "Austeria" (1982). ♦ Feb. 11 at 3:15 and Feb. 12 at 3: "Death of a President" (1977). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6:15: "Night Train" (1959). ♦ Starting Feb. 19: "*Film Comment* Selects," films chosen by the magazine's staff and contributors. Feb. 12 at 8:30: "Greendale" (2003, Bernard Shakey, a.k.a. Neil Young). ♦ Feb. 13 at 1:30 and 8 and Feb. 19 at 2: "All Tomorrow's Parties" (2003, Yu Lik-wai; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 13 at 3:30 and Feb. 16 at 8:15: "No Rest for the Brave" (2003, Alain Guiraudie; in French). ♦ Feb. 13 at 6 and 10: "The Grudge" (2002, Takashi Shimizu; in Japanese). ♦ Feb. 14 at 1:30: "L.A. Plays Itself" (2003, Thom Andersen). ♦ Feb. 14 at 5: "The World's Greatest Sinner" (1962, Timothy Carey). ♦ Feb. 14 at 7: "Bright Future" (2003, Kiyoshi Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Feb. 14 at 9: "Strayed" (2003, André Téchiné; in French). ♦ Feb. 15 at 1:30, Feb. 18 at 8, and Feb. 20 at 3:10: "The Story of Marie and Julien" (2003, Jacques Rivette; in French). ♦ Feb. 15 at 4:30 and Feb. 18 at 1:30 and 6: "The Magic Gloves" (2003, Martin Rejtman; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 15 at 6:30, Feb. 17 at 1, and Feb. 18 at 3:30: "Playing 'In the Company of Men' " (2003, Arnaud Desplechin; in French). ♦ Feb. 15 at 9, Feb. 19 at 4, and Feb. 20 at 1: "Ripley's Game" (2002, Liliana Cavana). ♦ Feb. 16 at 1 and Feb. 20 at 8: "Gambling, Gods, and LSD" (2002, Peter Mettler). ♦ Feb. 16 at 4:30: "Shanghai Panic" (2001, Andrew Cheng; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 16 at 6:30 and Feb. 20 at 6: "Welcome to Destination Shanghai" (2003, Cheng; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 19 at 9: "The Five Obstructions" (2003, Lars Von Trier and Jorgen Leth). ♦ A Jean-Claude Brisseau retrospective forms part of the series. All films are in French. Feb. 17 at 9: "Secret Things" (2002). ♦ Feb. 21 at 5 and 9:15: "White Wedding" (1989). ♦ Feb. 21 at 7 and Feb. 24 at 3: "The Black Angel" (1994). ♦ Feb. 22 at 2: "A Brutal Game" (1983). ♦ Feb. 22 at 4 and Feb. 24 at 1: "Céline" (1992). ♦ Feb. 22 at 6: "Workers for the Good Lord" (1994). ♦ Feb. 22 at 8:15: "Sound and Fury" (1987).



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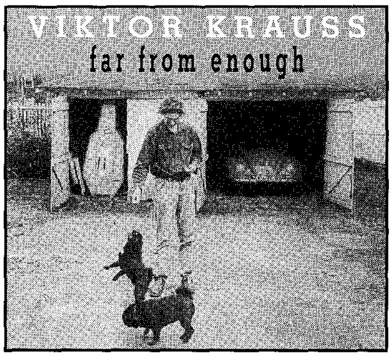

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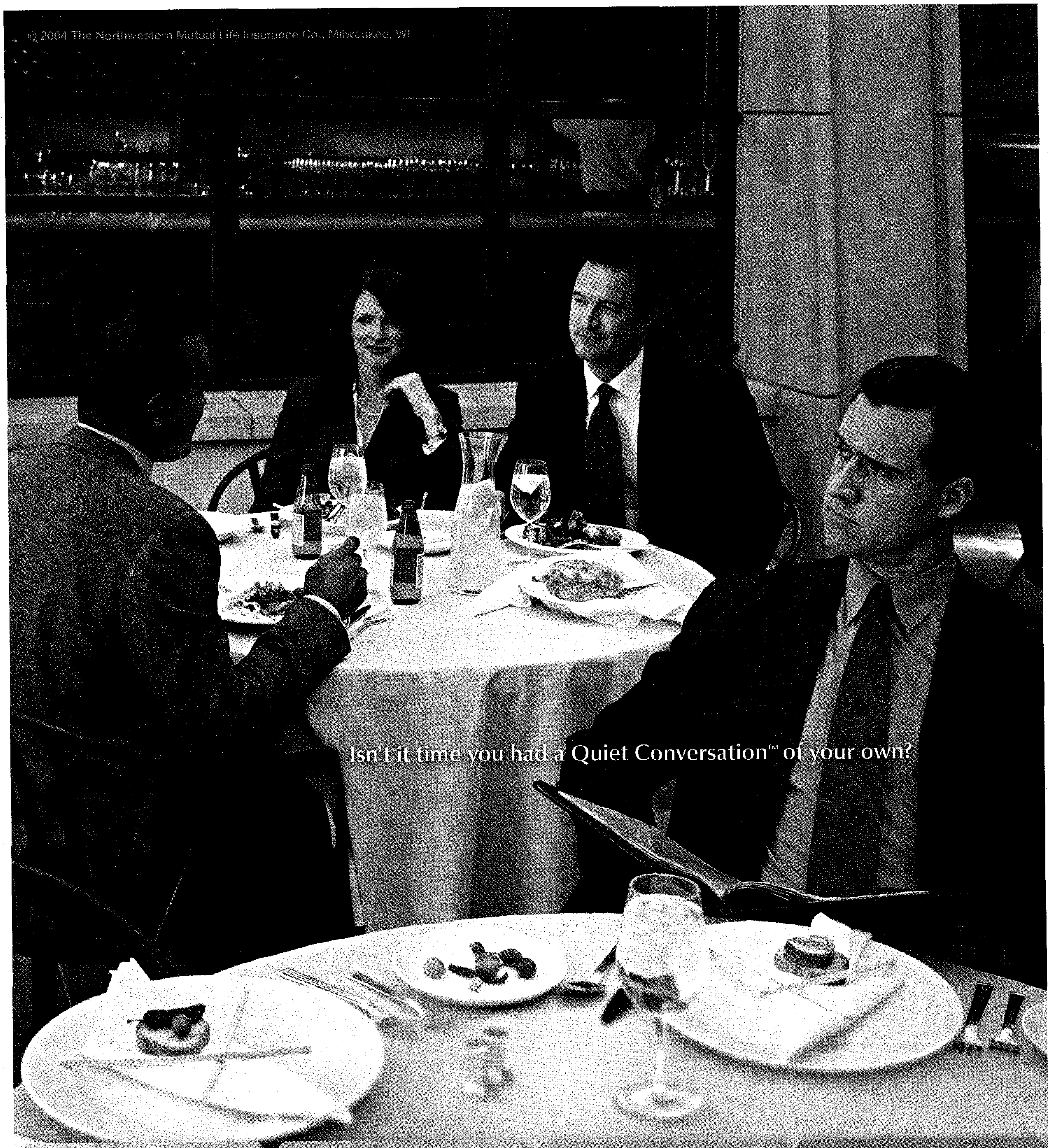
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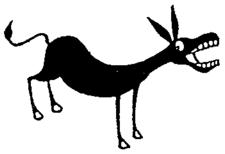
THE
NEW YORKER

# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

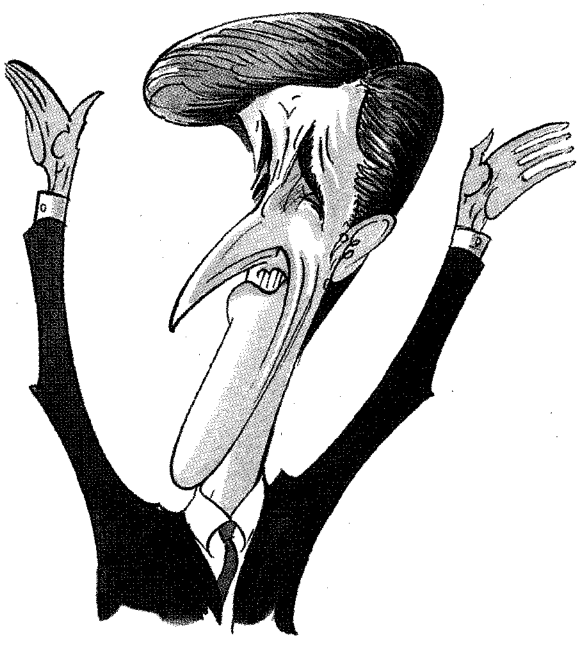
## COMMENT
## WARRIORS



In Seattle last Tuesday night, John Kerry gave a perfectly O.K. victory speech. He was a little wooden, though marginally less so than he'd been in Manchester the week before or in Des Moines the week before that. He still has a tendency to orate at people ("We will resume the great march of our history"), though as he gets closer to the Presidency his stiff, solemn formality gets easier to take. Yes, the speech was perfectly O.K. And what was most O.K. about it, from the point of view of many Democratic voters, was that it *was* a victory speech. With great passion, Democrats want to win—want to win more than they want to dominate or punish each other. The result, so far, may be the least bitter struggle for an open Presidential nomination in living memory. The traditional circular firing squad looks weirdly like a phalanx.

There are plenty of reasons for Senator Kerry's emergence, but the most important can be plainly seen in those primary-night tableaux. Behind Kerry and around him, salted among the local politicians and the family members and the union bigwigs, are always the veterans—grizzled, weatherbeaten, and exempt from the dress code. They have been the spark and soul of Kerry's campaign. He acknowledges them first, and in the first-person plural: "We're a little older and a little grayer, but we still know how to fight for our country."

A couple of months ago, when Kerry's once front-running campaign seemed all but dead, the common view among the political cognoscenti was that his Vietnam experience was not doing for him what it was supposed to do. He sounded boastful; he sounded defensive; he sounded like he was living in the past. Journalists were bored with it—they thought it might even hurt him, because his contemporaries, most of whom never served, might take it as a kind of reproach, while younger people might see it as a case of overbearing boomer chauvinism, like insisting that the car radio be tuned to Classic Rock. But, now that the actual voting is well under way, Democrats young and old are flocking to Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Kerry.



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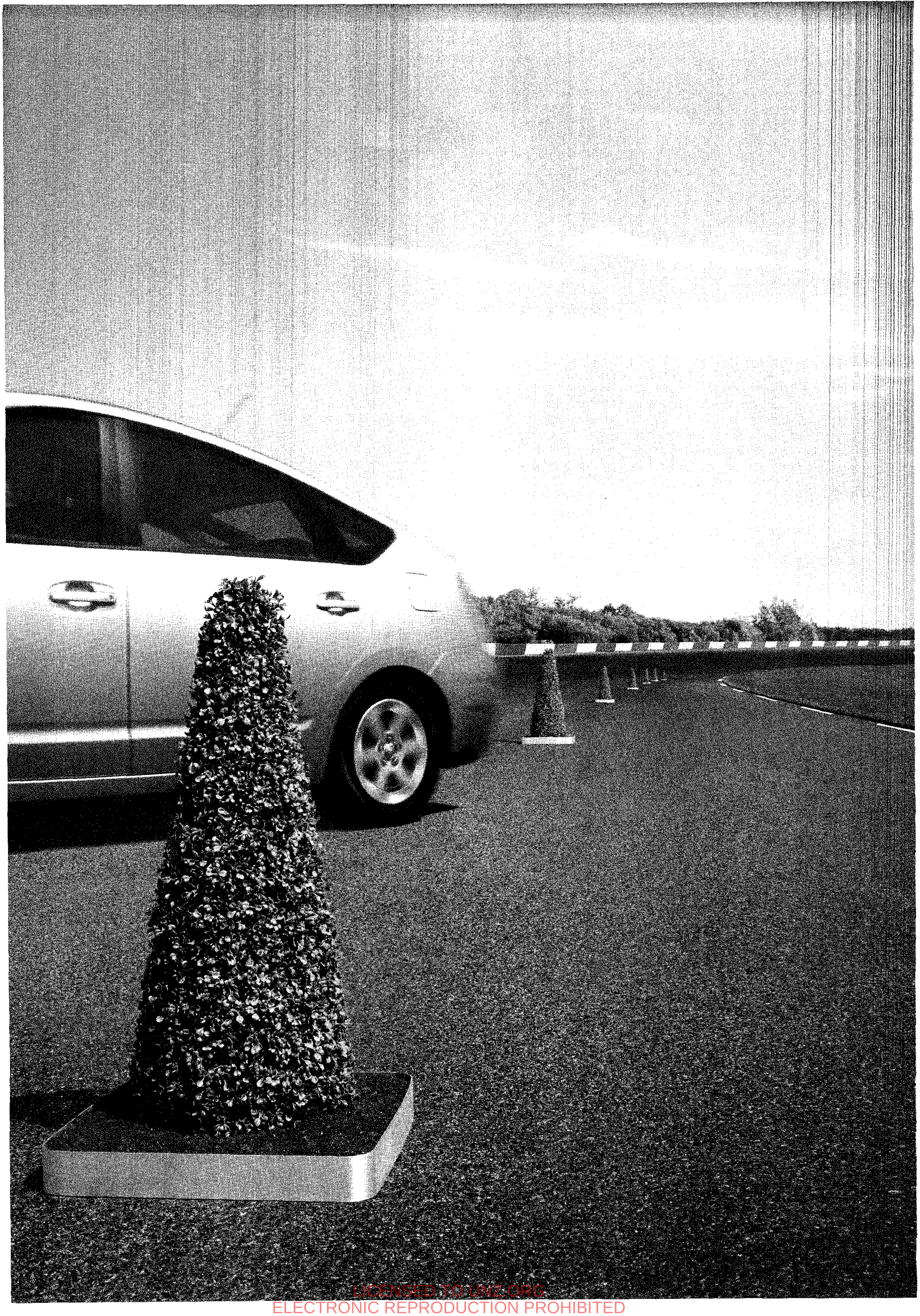
Howard Dean and his supporters thought that the "war issue" was about Iraq and that it would help them; after all, the position that the remaining viable candidates eventually adopted—that the rush to war was a mistake (and that Iraq, having been conquered, must now be salvaged)—was Dean's from the start. But Iraq may have helped Kerry at least as much as it helped Dean. As Tom Schaller, a University of Maryland political scientist, has pointed out, many Democratic voters themselves went through something close to Kerry's own fitful evolution, which took him from agonized support of authorizing force (at a time when the Administration was maintaining that force would be a last resort) to angry denunciation of the war's deceitful prologue and chaotic aftermath.

In any event, the "war issue" transcends Iraq. In some mysterious way, it has become what professionals call a character issue. Originally, for Kerry supporters and strategic voters eager above all to unseat President Bush, the calculus was fairly straightforward. Alone among the candidates, Kerry was a war hero. Therefore,



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once the Bush-Cheney campaign, with its nearly two hundred million dollars and its talk-radio outliers, revved up the rotating knives, only Kerry would have a shield against attempts to portray the Democrats as unpatriotic wimps.

This logic was so powerful that it drew Wesley Clark into the race when Kerry faltered. When the General faltered, too, and Kerry regained his footing, Clark's campaign became superfluous. But Clark performed a service for Kerry by inadvertently bringing out the opposite number to Kerry's story of wartime camaraderie and heroism, which is Bush's lack of either. Clark did this by allowing Michael Moore to appear at one of his rallies and accuse Bush of having been a deserter. In the commonsense meaning of desertion—fleeing one's post under enemy fire—the charge was absurd, because during the Vietnam War enemy fire was something Bush was at pains to stay an ocean away from. But, as Walter V. Robinson documented four years ago in a long, meticulous report in the Boston *Globe*, Bush apparently skipped a year of his reserve duties with the Air National Guard, starting in May of 1972. In the regular armed forces, according to a U.S. Army Research Institute study published in 2002, "any soldier who has taken an unauthorized leave from his / her training or duty station is considered AWOL. On the 31st day of AWOL, this status is officially changed to Dropped From Rolls (DFR), or desertion." Luckily for Bush, the Guard was more lenient with its weekend warriors, especially the politically well-connected ones. Bush campaign spokesmen—who have furiously attacked any questioning of the President's service record as "slanderous" and "gutter politics"—point to his honorable discharge as proof of the irreproachability of his service. But it is reasonable to ask if that honorable discharge was merely another instance of the favoritism that had moved him to the head of a five-hundred-man queue awaiting admission to the Guard, and that then awarded him an officer's commission and admission to flight school despite a dismal score on a pilot aptitude test.

Bush's shirking of his Guard duties never became a full-fledged national news story. More ink was devoted to charges that Al Gore—who served in Vietnam as an enlisted Army reporter, without heroics but not without danger—had somehow exaggerated his role there. The other big papers failed to follow up the *Globe's* report. It is normal for a Presidential candidate's youthful transgressions to be examined when he first runs, not when he is standing for a second term. But, in the case of Bush's Guard service, that didn't happen. Now it is beginning to, and it is entirely fitting and proper that it should. A confluence of events has brought it to the fore: the probability of Kerry's nomination; the collapse of the weapons-of-mass-destruction justification for the Iraq war and the consequent Bush credibility gap, which is growing nearly as fast as the budget deficit; and the President's "Mission Accomplished" landing on an aircraft carrier in a dashing flight suit, which, unlike Michael Dukakis's Snoopy helmet in 1988, was a perfect fit. At the time, Bush looked way cool, and Democrats felt way despairing. But Kerry is in a position to point out that waging war and playing dress-up are not the same, and he is doing just that. The general election campaign promises to be as brutal as the Democratic primary campaign has been gentle. And it remains to be determined if John Kerry is more of a politician than George W. Bush. But he is, unmistakably, a braver, more honorable man.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

## THE BENCH
### STAR WITNESS

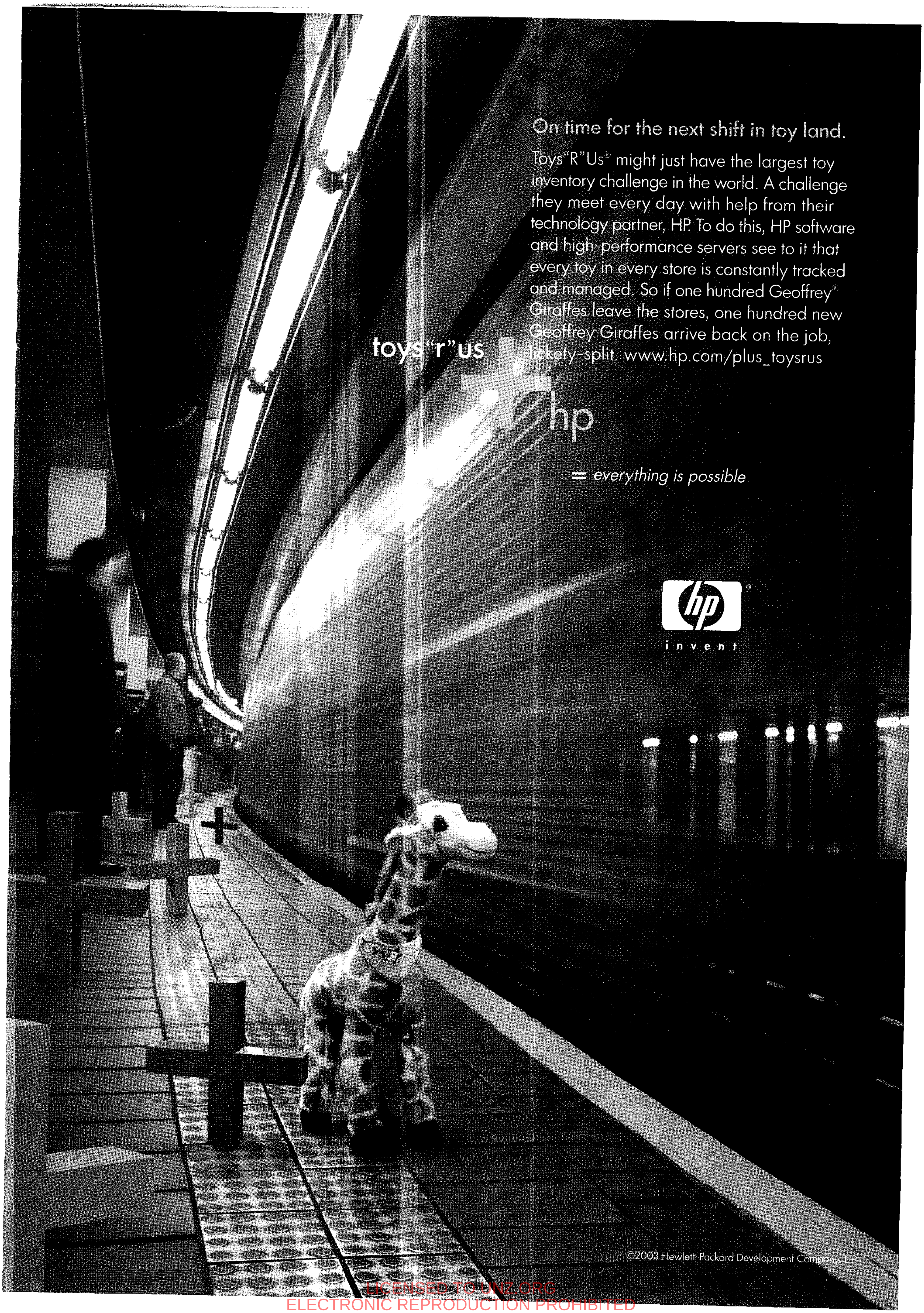
As crime scenes go, the Merrill Lynch branch office in Rockefeller Center seems to lack a certain grit. This is where Martha Stewart's infamous sale of nearly four thousand shares of ImClone stock was processed, on December 27, 2001, and it was the focus of much testimony at her trial last week. An administrator named Julia Monaghan handled the unique managerial challenges of the branch. It was her job, she testified, to deal with everything from chronic lateness to "somebody wearing too much perfume."

Plenty of crimes take place in offices, of course, but Monaghan—a crisply tailored woman with a bit of an outer-borough brogue—seems to have played den mother as much as universe master.

After the Securities and Exchange Commission first questioned Douglas Faneuil, the former assistant to the stockbroker and co-defendant, Peter Bacanovic, about the ImClone trade, Monaghan said that she thought Faneuil looked "stressed." So she told him to take a friend out to dinner on Merrill Lynch. (They went to Gramercy Tavern, which is, as was pointed out in cross-examination, "one of the finest restaurants in New York City.") When Faneuil's vapors persisted, she gave him an extra week of paid vacation.

The gift of the vacation may actually have some relevance to the case. In an earlier court filing, the prosecution charged that it was Bacanovic who "offered to arrange for Faneuil to receive an additional week of vacation," as a sort of payoff for lying to the authorities. This wasn't the only way the government fell a little short in its attempt to place a sinister cast on the cheery routines at this Merrill Lynch branch. Did Bacanovic, the prosecutor Michael Schachter asked Monaghan at the end of her testimony, give any of his other assistants midyear bonuses as large as Faneuil's? Yes, Monaghan replied evenly. He'd given one to Faneuil's predecessor. The response prompted Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum to needle Schachter. "Always a good idea to know the answers to the questions you ask," she said, and the courtroom filled with derisive laughter.

This is not to say that the news was all bad for the prosecution. Faneuil, who has the drowsy voice of a soft-rock disk jockey, made up for his pallid delivery with a riveting account of the day of the trade. That morning, Faneuil recalled, he took call after call from family members and associates of Sam Waksal, the former ImClone chief executive, who were desperately trying to dump their shares in advance of an unfavorable regulatory ruling. Faneuil relayed the news to Bacanovic, who was on vacation in Florida. "Oh, my God," Bacanovic said. "Get Martha on the phone." Later that day, Faneuil tracked down Stewart on the tarmac of the San Antonio airport, where her private plane was refuelling, en route to Mexico. (Stewart, like everyone else but Faneuil, apparently, was on vacation.) It was Stewart's statements to investigators about this phone call—primarily that she didn't know the Waksals were selling their shares—that led to the charges against her.



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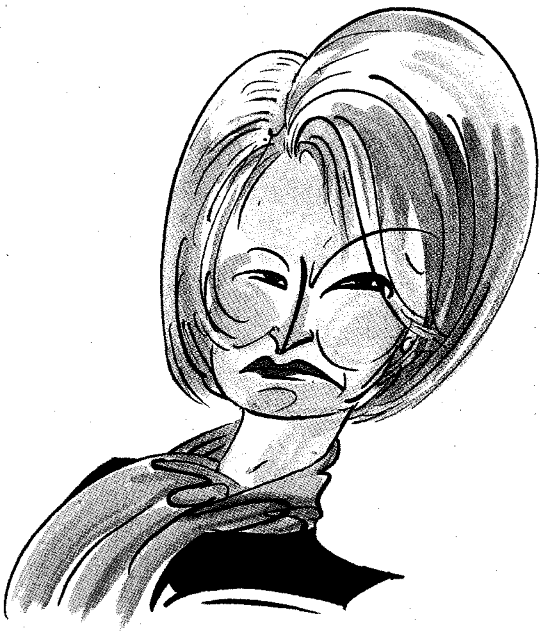
Faneuil seemed to gain confidence the longer he was on the stand. The defense tried to rattle him by bringing up what seemed to be a recent history of extremely modest drug use—occasionally marijuana and less often Ecstasy, "at a particular dance venue," as the witness put it, with courtroom formality. Judge Cedarbaum cut Faneuil a break by forbidding the mention of his use of marijuana during a trip to Jamaica last year. The reason? No one in the courtroom could say with certainty whether ganja was illegal in Jamaica. By the time Faneuil turned to his last conversations with Bacanovic, the young man was raising and lowering his voice in what seemed more like dramatic reënactment than like dreary testimony. "I'm going to object to the acting," Robert Morvillo, Stewart's lead lawyer, said, but he was overruled.

Still, there seemed at times to be a hole at the heart of the government's case. The prosecution never charged Stewart with criminal insider trading—that is, with acting on an illegal tip from Faneuil. The peculiar result is that she stands accused of lying to cover up a legal stock trade.

According to the charges, Bacanovic made a rather odd decision by blithely delegating to his assistant the task of inviting a prominent client to join a criminal enterprise. Bacanovic could have called Stewart himself and passed along the tip about the Waksal sales, but apparently, according to Faneuil, he wouldn't be able to reach a phone. The prosecutor asked Faneuil why. "I remember something very vague about a boat," Faneuil said.

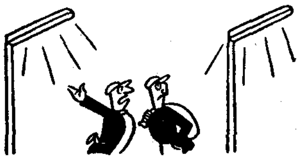
Courtroom 110 in the federal courthouse on Foley Square has been the scene of the most famous trials in the history of New York; Stewart is seated in a perch once occupied by the Rosenbergs, Fat Tony Salerno, and the blind sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. But the genteel proceedings seem to have made the case's significance look smaller. Stewart herself generally sits composed and expressionless through each day's testimony, but she must notice that her trial seems like a relic of a bygone era. An exhibit displaying Waksal's phone messages from December 27, 2001, showed a call from "Tara from *Talk* magazine." An invitation to Waksal's Christmas party, held that same month, came from the office of the publicist Lizzie Grubman (pre-prison). Even the behavior of the spectators harks back to yesteryear: forbidden to use cell phones, they race during breaks to line up at the phone booths in the hall.

—*Jeffrey Toobin*



*Martha Stewart in federal court in Manhattan.*

### DESIGN DEPT.
## CITY LIGHTS

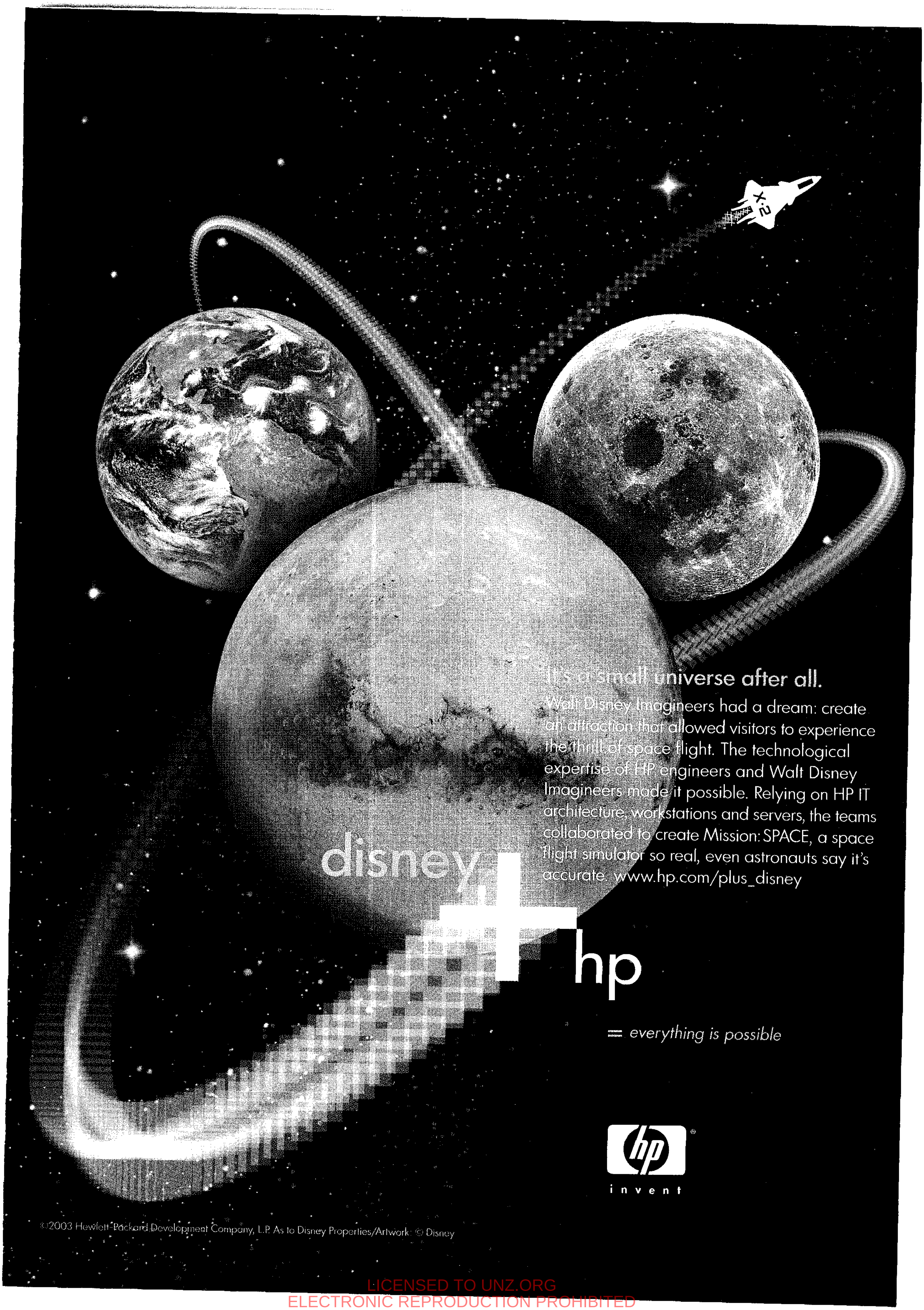


A proper familiarity with the street lamps of New York requires a sustained interest beginning at an early, pre-self-conscious age—long before the native disdain for tourists kicks in and, with it, the automatic, jaded lowering of the eyes, the tunnel vision. Kevin Walsh, for instance, recalls his parents taking him on exploratory boyhood bus rides around Bay Ridge, in the early sixties. "I would sort of imitate the lampposts as they went past me," he said last week. "I would take a pencil and a spoon and a small light bulb from a flashlight, and make my own little lampposts. I did this until I was six or seven." Jeff Saltzman, over in Rego Park, was three years old when he first started "noticing the lights," as he put it. Instead of making 3-D models, he made drawings, "like little candy-cane figures with balls attached." Walsh and Saltzman, who are both now in their mid-forties, are perhaps the most knowledgeable street-lamp buffs in town.

There are more than three hundred thousand street lights in operation in the city today, and—this will be news even to most locals—some thirty-five to forty models, with names like Bishop's Crook, Lyre, Reverse Scroll, and Davit Pole. (During the Depression, there were nearly eighty different types, fewer than twenty of which have been preserved.) It's a thrilling time, in any event, to be a street-light enthusiast: last week, an international competition to design a new, citywide lighting standard, fit for the twenty-first century, began in earnest. It marks the first major call for original street-light design in New York in almost fifty years, since the Art Moderne inspiration of Donald Deskey (the designer of the Crest toothpaste tube and the interior of Radio City Music Hall) gave us the "cobra-head" modules that now lean, more like brontosauruses than like snakes, over so many of the city's avenues and streets.

The Deskey cobras, arriving at about the same time as the Jetsons, never quite inspired futuristic awe, and they have long been derided—at least, by those who regularly risk looking up while they walk. They lack ornamentation—by design, of course—and seem cheaply made, which they are. (This is not a drawback, in the eyes of the Department of Transportation.) "I thought they were hideous when I was a kid," Saltzman said. "I didn't even want to live on a street with one of them." The variety most common to his neighborhood featured tapering octagonal poles with curved "quarter loop" masts, or what Saltzman likes to call "Kojak lights," since they appeared in recurring driving footage from the old Telly Savalas detective show. (This was notable because, as Saltzman pointed out, "Kojak" was filmed in Los Angeles, not Queens.)

Walsh vividly remembers the near-wholesale replacement of cast-iron lamps with Deskeys. "It was a strange, exhilarating, depressing-yet-exciting time to be a six-year-old lamppost fan, back in 1963," he writes on his Web site, forgotten-ny.com. "My street, Sixth Av-



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enue in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, was lined with the Victorian-era chocolate-colored 'Corvington' long-armed mast poles I had grown used to in my short life." (They look something like a Beaux-Arts hangman apparatus.) And then, suddenly, "the new octagonal-shafted aluminum poles, with their odd greenish-white mercury lights . . . the goosenecked, ungainly specimens . . . proliferated in New York City streets like ragweed."

In the nineteen-eighties, in a move of seeming atonement, the city embarked on a retro mission, installing neoclassical replicas of the turn-of-the-century cast-irons: Bishop's Crook imitations (like clerical staffs, with a hanging teardrop-shaped lantern) on Sixth Avenue in the Village; Corvington look-alikes (officially called Type 24Ms) on Columbus; Reverse Scrolls (Type F) on Eighth Street. "When they first started," Saltzman said, "I thought it was real cute. It's nice on a few streets here or there to put up a couple of retros, but, for me, the cuteness has worn off. It just goes on and on—it's overkill."

One current contestant with old-school inclinations has already sought Walsh's help. "He asked me to send him a photo of a very old octagonal pole that was on Union Turnpike, in a parking lot, because it still had one of those cup lights attached to it," Walsh said. (Cup lights were introduced after the Second World War but did not, for the most part, survive the transition from incandescent to sodium-based lamps, in the seventies.) "You know, they replaced that cup light about three years ago, but I managed to snap a photo before they did."

Walsh isn't sure exactly what he'd like to see from the new design, but he has an idea about where he might like it to go: on Fifth Avenue, and nowhere else. "You used to have a uniform pole there," he said. "Originally, it was the cast-iron twin lamps—Fifth Avenue Twins. Then they all went to the Deskey, twin-mast Deskeys. But now Fifth Avenue has become a mishmash of poles. And it shouldn't. I think Fifth Avenue deserves its own pole. It's supposed to be the Queen of Avenues."

Saltzman, meanwhile, is preparing to revise his assessment of the cobra era. "As I get older, I get more functional in my thinking, and less sentimental," he said. And while he has no particular feelings for the "octa-poles" to which cobra heads are now typically affixed, the original aluminum Deskey models are beginning to seem more appealing as the prospect of extinction arises. "I'm almost like an old-timer getting nostalgic for cast iron," he said.

—*Ben McGrath*

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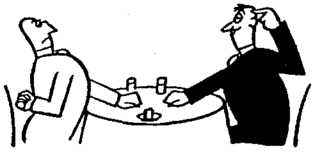
## NEW KID ON THE BLOCK DEPT.
## NAME THIS JOINT



Not long ago, Erez Itzhaki, a thirty-four-year-old Israeli real-estate broker and developer, and his business partner, Eric Salomon, decided to sponsor a contest to name their latest venture, a shawarma-and-falafel restaurant on Third Avenue at St. Mark's Place. Wanting to involve their new community—they have worked mostly in SoHo—they posted a bright-yellow advertisement for the contest over their boarded-up storefront (www.name-our-restaurant.com) and offered twenty-five hundred dollars to the winner. So far, seven thousand people have sent in roughly thirteen thousand entries.

Itzhaki, whose previous entrepreneurial activities have not offered him much occasion for invention (he has arranged retail leases for Starbucks and Zales), didn't come up with anything good on his own. "First, we thought Shawafel"—shawarma and falafel—"then, no, we can't pronounce it," he said the other day, in his lower-Broadway offices. He was wearing a pin-striped suit and a yellow silk tie. "My wife is living twenty years here. She said no. We should choose a catchy name, short, easy to pronounce." (Itzhaki's wife's name is Sheerlee. She changed the spelling of her Israeli name, Shirley, because in America everyone pronounced it "*Sure*-lee." Recently, the Itzhakis had a baby girl and named her Shiraz, a blend of Sheerlee and Erez, and now Shiraz is the only kind of wine they drink.)

The restaurant, which opens later this month, was Itzhaki's father's idea, and he will be the cook. For many years, Rami Itzhaki operated a shawarma-and-falafel place in Israel called Jacko & Sons (shawarma is sliced marinated meat on pita—a Middle Eastern version of a gyro). Visiting New York, he wanted to try the local cuisine. "He said, 'Sushi, sushi, sushi'—we ate one day sushi and then he wanted to eat shawarma and falafel. He said, 'Let me open a restaurant here. I'm sure it's going to be packed.' I said, 'Are you sure?' My father said, 'If they could get used to Mexican food, why can't they get used to Israeli food?' Falafel and shawarma—three hundred years from now, our national food!" Itzhaki smiled modestly. "No, I don't think so."

Still, he is enthusiastic. "Our falafel is going to be unique," he said. "Our falafel is going to be green. Very green." Cilantro or parsley? "One of those. The shawarma is going to be layers of turkey—we'll slice it and clean it and marinate it. There will be fresh-baked pita on the spot."

Itzhaki polled his friends about where to open his restaurant. "They tell me the East Village is the best," he said. "I had heard that the Starbucks at Astor Place is the second busiest in the world—I think the first is in Japan." He bought out St. Mark's Pizza, a grimy late-night joint. This is probably what inspired entries No. 370 and No. 3466 in the naming contest: The Restaurant That Now Owns the Space Where They Used to Make Some of the Best Pizza in Manhattan and BRING ST. MARK'S PIZZA BACK! Other submissions similarly reflect the concerns of the neighborhood but may not translate well to the branches that Itzhaki has planned in the Garment District and on Wall Street: the Shawarmatory (the restaurant is just down the street from some N.Y.U. dorms), Global Shawarming, Sausage Fest, Monkey Emporium, Meatwhistle, and Tom Can't Wait, in honor of Tom Waits. "I had many names around 'Mark,' " Itzhaki said, adding that he was grateful to all the contestants.

The prices at Itzhaki's restaurant, which, incidentally, is a perfectly good name, will be kept low—less than five dollars for a sandwich—but the space will be sleek and modern, with concrete floors and a lounge with mosaic floors. "We use very expensive everything," Itzhaki said. "It's not going to be a cheesy place with a lot of items. It's going to be very, very nice. The venting, everything. I don't want people to smell like grease. I don't go to these places, because then my suit smells like grease." If all goes well, the restaurant will earn the name suggested by one contestant: Gentrified.

—*Dana Goodyear*

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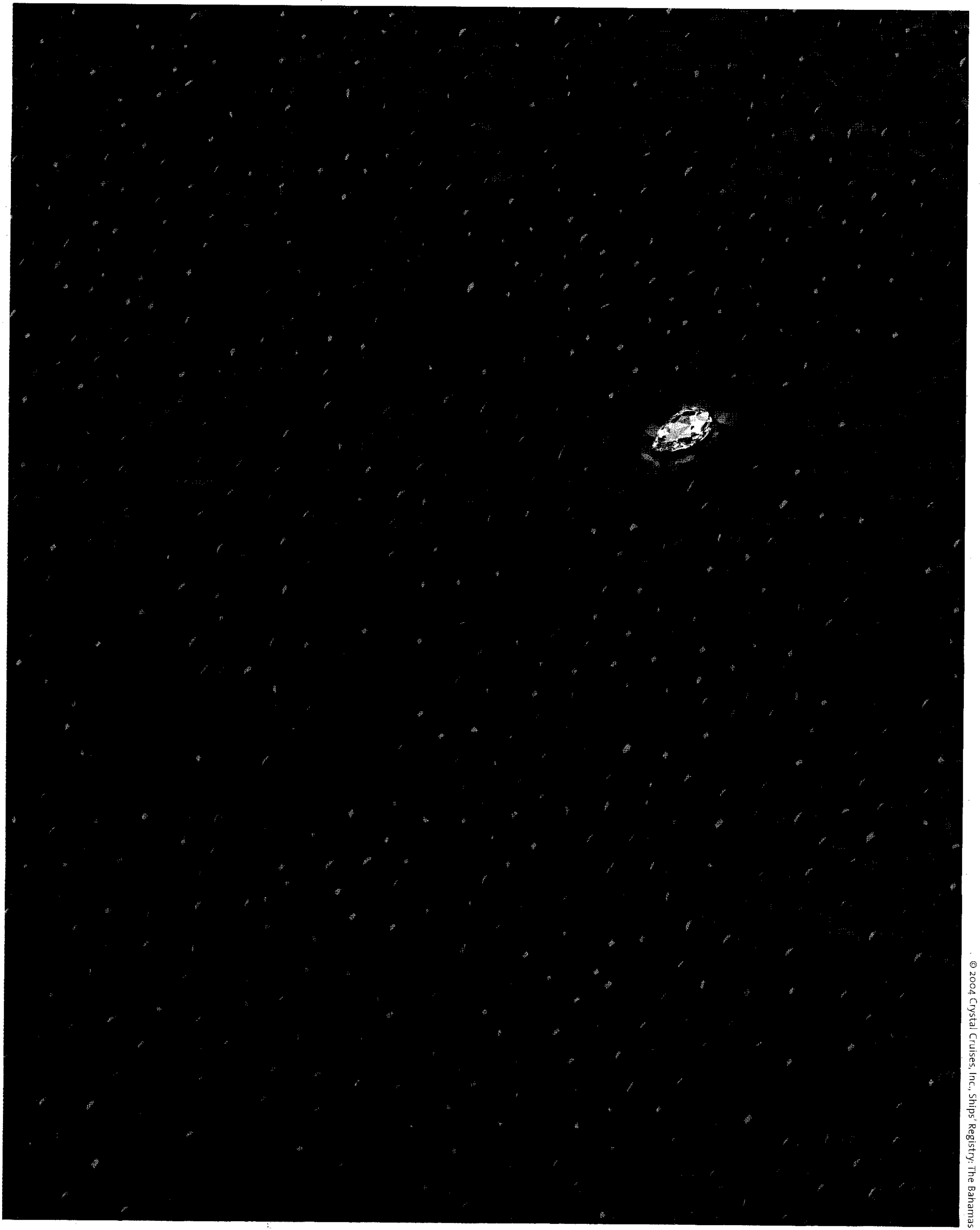

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# THE FINANCIAL PAGE
# THE PIPELINE PROBLEM

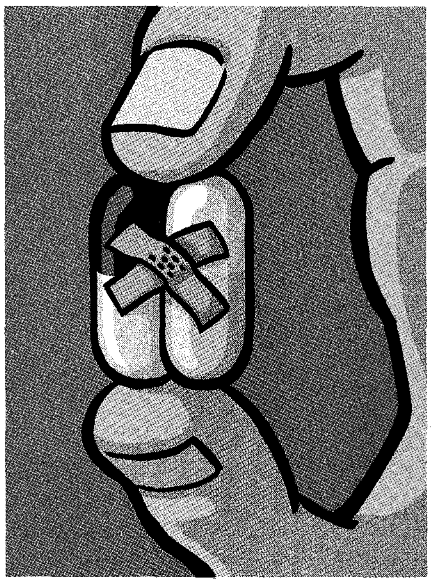
Merck is one of history's most innovative corporations. It devotes three billion dollars a year and ten thousand people to the research and development of new drugs. So here's a question: How many drugs for diabetes do you think all these men and women, this army of scientists, managed to come up with in the past four years? None. How many anticancer drugs? Zero. How many drugs that fight infectious diseases? Zero. Since 2000, in fact, Merck has introduced just three new drugs. Drug development is hard, but, by any measure, eking out less than one product a year is no way to make a living in the major leagues.

Profitable as "big pharma" remains—Pfizer made twelve billion dollars last year—a deep sense of anxiety prevails in the industry. That's because Merck is no exception: most drug companies have what's known as a pipeline problem. That is, the patents on the drugs that are now making money for them are about to expire, and they don't have enough new drugs in development. The number of "new molecular entities"—drugs not yet introduced in the United States in any form—approved annually by the F.D.A. has fallen by sixty per cent since 1996, and new drug applications have dropped nearly forty per cent. What's more, many of the drugs that are being invented are of the "me, too" variety—variants of existing drugs.

Big pharma's solution has been a mania for mergers. As the industry joke has it, you know you're in the pharmaceuticals business when you've worked for five companies in the past two years and you're still sitting at the same old desk. If your own pipeline is low, the thinking goes, buy another one. And so Pfizer bought Warner-Lambert and Pharmacia, Glaxo merged with SmithKline Beecham, and Astra merged with Zeneca. Last month, the French drugmaker Sanofi launched a hostile bid for Aventis. When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping.

The traditional pharmaceutical research model harks back to processes developed by German and Swiss chemical firms in the late nineteenth century, when chemists synthesized and screened thousands of compounds in search of a few potential new drug candidates. Although the methodology is more sophisticated now, success is still in many ways thought to be a matter of brute force: throw hundreds of scientists at a problem and hope for the best. It's crapshoot economics; a few great successes can pay for myriad failures. So bigger has always been seen as better.

Today, though, the advantages of size are trumped by what are called "diseconomies" of scale: inertia, bureaucracy, risk aversion, clock-watching, office politics. Joseph Kim saw a lot of this firsthand, as a scientist at Merck for nine years, and now he likes to compare Merck to the Titanic. "Companies like Merck have fantastic scientists working for them, but they also have these middle and upper layers of managers who are just taking up space," he said last week. "I like to call them 'anti-bodies,' because they just sit there being anti-everything. No one ever gets fired for saying no to a new idea." Now, as the founder and the C.E.O. of a little biotech called VGX Pharmaceuticals, Kim has a novel type of AIDS drug in clinical trials and a promising drug for cancer in development.



It turns out that research and development *doesn't* scale—that bigger may be worse. That's why the engines of pharmaceutical innovation have for some time now been smaller biotech firms like VGX, which can concentrate on a few promising avenues of research and can offer enterprising scientists the freedom—and the potentially enormous rewards—of working as entrepreneurs. Just as, in the seventies, the locus of innovation in the tech business shifted from Goliaths like Digital and I.B.M. toward the smaller, more narrowly focussed start-ups of Silicon Valley, so it is shifting now from big to little pharma.

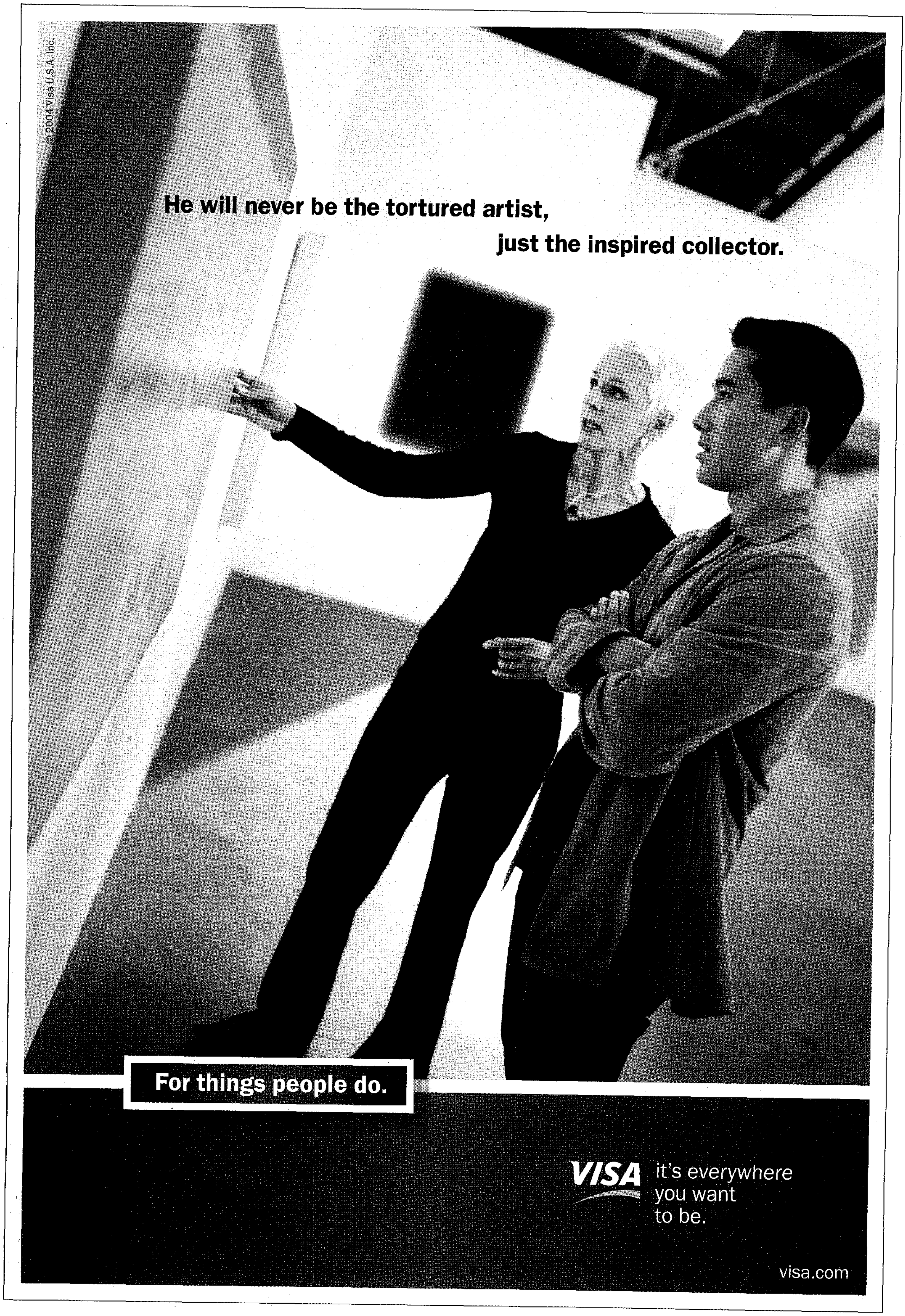
Where does this leave the Mercks and Pfizers of the world? What they have that companies like VGX typically don't is a powerful brand, experience with regulators, and, not least, a legion of salesmen adept at "detailing" doctors about the virtues of new drugs. They need to rethink, radically, the way they do R. & D., or else get out of R. & D. entirely and focus on what they do best: marketing and distribution.

All the big drug companies are already licensing products from or taking equity stakes in biotechs. Bayer has a fifteen-year deal with a firm called Curagen; Novartis has signed up Vertex; and Lilly has partnered with the biotech ICOS to sell Cialis in the United States. But none of them have shown any interest in tossing out the test tubes and becoming pure distributors.

They have their reasons. Drug companies take a lot of flak for spending as much as they do on marketing and advertising. A company that made no pretense of inventing its own drugs would probably come under even more pressure to cut prices. There's also the industry's romantic self-image: the drugmakers like to think of themselves as fundamentally scientific organizations, powered by geniuses in white coats. But, when it comes to innovation, these recombinant corporate entities—Aventis is itself an amalgamation of Hoechst, Roussel, Marion Merrill Dow, and others—have been tested and have failed. So maybe it's time to move on. Peering into the future, one can see the faint outlines of a pharmaceutical industry that looks a bit like the movie business, with big pharmaceutical "studios" marketing, distributing, and perhaps even underwriting the costs of smaller drug "producers." The only difference is that the drug studios might actually make money.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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RECOLLECTIONS

# THE LIVING DEAD

*In our little Normandy village, the natives tell many strange stories.*

BY DAVID SEDARIS

I was on the front porch, drowning a mouse in a bucket, when this van pulled up, which was strange. On an average day, a total of fifteen cars might pass the house, but no one ever stops. And this was late, three o'clock in the morning. The couple across the street are asleep by nine, and, from what I can tell, the people next door turn in an hour or so later. There are no street lamps in our village in Normandy, so when it's dark it's really dark. And when it's quiet you can hear everything.

"Did I tell you about the burglar who got stuck in the chimney?" That was the big story last summer. One time, it happened in the village at the bottom of the hill, the pretty one, bisected by a river, and another time it took place fifteen miles in the opposite direction. I heard the story from four people, and each time it happened in a different place.

"So this burglar," people said. "He tried the doors and windows, and when those wouldn't open he climbed up onto the roof."

It was always a summer house, a cottage owned by English people whose names no one seemed to remember. The couple left in early September and returned nine months later to find a shoe in their fireplace. "Is this yours?" the wife asked her husband.

The two had just arrived. There were beds to be made and closets to air out, so, between one thing and another, the shoe was forgotten. It was early June, chilly, and as night fell the husband decided to light a fire.

At this point in the story, the tellers were beside themselves, their eyes aglow, as if reflecting the light of a campfire. "Do you honestly expect me to believe this?" I'd say. "I mean, *really.*"

At the beginning of the summer, the local paper devoted three columns to a Camembert-eating contest. Competitors were pictured, hands behind their backs, their faces buried in sticky cheese. This on the front page. In an area so hard up for news, I think a death by starvation might command the headlines for, oh, about six years.

"But wait," I'm told. "There's more!"

As the room filled with smoke, the husband stuck a broom up the chimney. Something was blocking the flue, and he poked at it again and again, dislodging the now skeletal burglar, who fell feet first into the flames.

There was always a pause here, a break between the story and the practical questions that would ultimately destroy it. "So who was this burglar?" I'd ask. "Did they identify his body?"

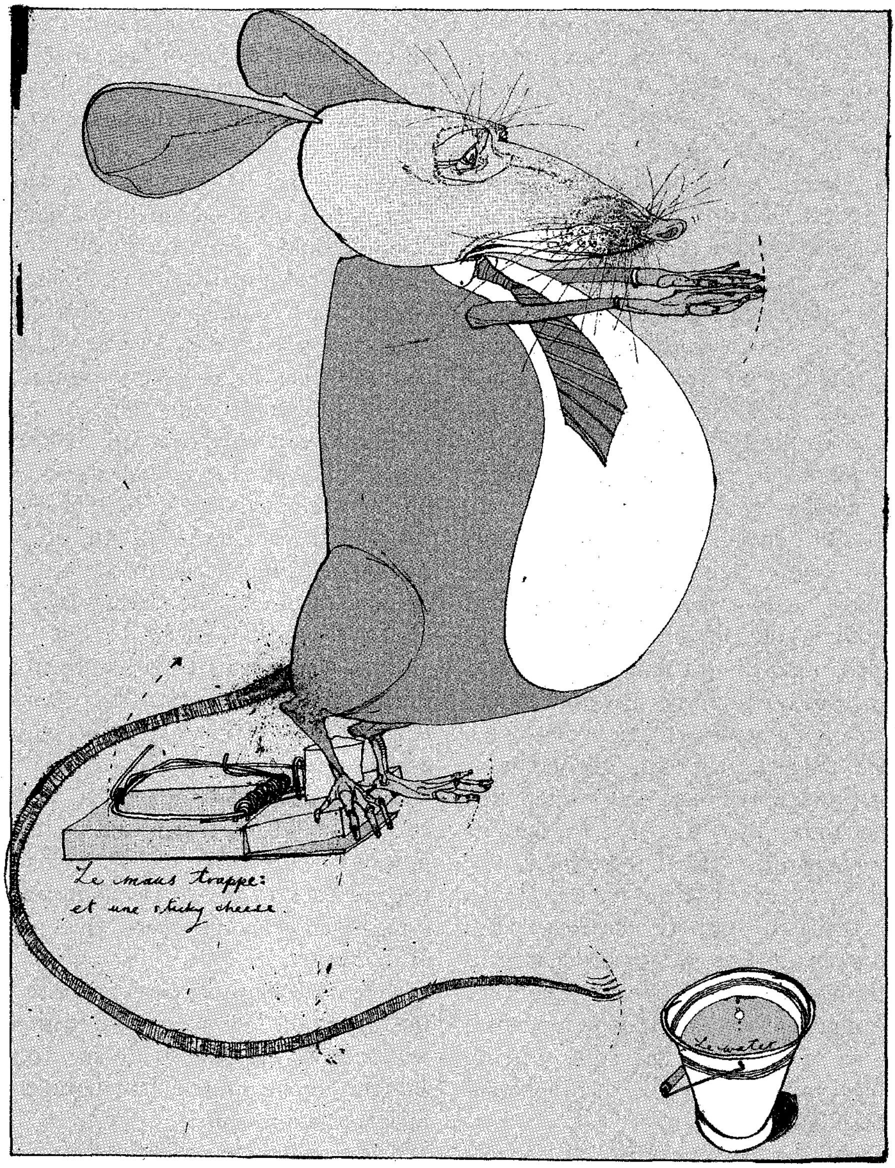
He was a gypsy, a drifter, and, on two occasions, an Arab. No one remembered exactly where he was from, "but it's true," they said. "You can ask anyone," by which they meant the neighbor who had told them, or the person they themselves had told five minutes earlier.

I never believed that a burglar starved to death in a chimney. I don't believe that his skeleton dropped onto the hearth. But I do believe in spooks, especially when my boyfriend, Hugh, is away, and I'm left alone in the country. During the war, our house was occupied by Nazis. The former owner died in the bedroom, as did the owner before her, but it's not their ghosts that I worry about. It's silly, I know, but what frightens me is the possibility of zombies, former townspeople wandering about in pus-covered nightgowns. There's a church graveyard a quarter of a mile away, and were its residents to lurch out the gate and take a left, ours would be the third house they would stumble upon. Lying in bed with all the lights on, I draw up contingency plans on the off-chance they might come a-callin'. The attic seems a wise hideout, but I'd have to secure the door, which would take time—time you do not have when zombies are steadily working their way through your windows.

I used to lie awake for hours, but now, if Hugh's gone for the night, I'll just stay up and keep myself busy: writing letters, cleaning the oven, replacing missing buttons. I won't put in a load of laundry, because the machine is too loud and would drown out other, more significant noises, namely the shuffling footsteps of the living dead.

On this particular night, the night that the van pulled up, I was in what serves as the combination kitchen-living room, trying to piece together a complex model of the Visible Man. The body was clear plastic, a shell for the organs, which ranged in color from bright red to a dull, liverish purple. We'd bought it as a birthday gift for a thirteen-year-old boy, the son of a friend, who pronounced it *nul*, meaning worthless, unacceptable. Last summer, he'd wanted to be a doctor, but over the next few months he seemed to have changed his mind, deciding instead that he might like to design shoes. I suggested that he at least keep the feet, but when he turned up his nose we gave him twenty euros and decided to keep the model for ourselves. I had just separated the digestive system when I heard a familiar noise coming from overhead, and dropped half the colon onto the floor.

There's a walnut tree in the side yard, and every year Hugh collects the fruit and lays it out on the attic floor to dry. Shortly thereafter the mice come in. I don't know how they climb the stairs, but they do, and the first thing on their list is to take Hugh's walnuts. The nuts are much too big to be carried by mouth, so instead the mice roll them across the floor, pushing them toward the nests they build in the tight spaces between the walls and the eaves. Once there, they discover, the walnuts won't fit, and, while I find this to be comic, Hugh thinks differently and sets the attic with traps I normally spring before the mice can get to them. Were they rats it would be different, but a couple of mice—"Come on," I say. "What could be cuter?"



*This was for the best, whether the mouse realized it or not.*

DAVID HUGHES

Sometimes, when the rolling gets on my nerves, I'll turn on the attic light and make like I'm coming up the stairs. This quiets them for a while, but on this night the trick didn't work. The noise kept up, but sounded like something being dragged rather than rolled. A shingle? A heavy piece of toast? Again I turned on the attic light, and when the noise continued I went upstairs, and found a mouse caught in one of the traps that Hugh had set. The steel bar had come down on his back, and he was pushing himself in a tight circle, not in a death throe, but with a spirit of determination, an effort to work within this new set of boundaries. "I can live with this," he seemed to be saying. "Really. Just give me a chance."

I couldn't leave him that way, so I scooted the trapped mouse into a cardboard box, and carried him down to the front porch. The fresh air, I figured, would do him some good, and once released he could run down the stairs and into the yard, free from the house that now held such bitter memories. I should have lifted the bar with my fingers, but instead, worried that he might try to bite me, I held the trap down with my foot, and attempted to pry it open with the end of a metal ruler. Which was stupid. No sooner had the bar been raised than it snapped back, this time on the mouse's neck. My next three attempts were equally punishing, and when he was finally freed he staggered onto the doormat, every imaginable bone broken in at least four different places. Anyone could see that he was not going to get any better. Not even a vet could have fixed this mouse, and so, to put him out of his misery, I decided to drown him.

The first step, and for me the most difficult, was going into the cellar to get the bucket. This involved leaving the well-lit porch, walking around to the side of the house, and entering what is surely the bleakest and most terrifying hole in all of Europe: low ceiling, stone walls, a dirt floor stamped with paw prints. I never go in without announcing myself. "*Hyaa,*" I yell. "*Hyaa. Hyaa.*" It's the sound my father makes when he enters his toolshed, the cry of cowboys as they round up dogies, and it suggests a certain degree of authority. Snakes, bats, weasels; it's time to head up and move on out. When retrieving the bucket, I carried a flashlight in each hand, holding them low, like pistols. Then I kicked in the door—"*Hyaa. Hyaa*"—grabbed what I was looking for, and ran. I was back on the porch in less than a minute, but it took much longer for my hands to stop shaking.

The problem with drowning an animal—even a crippled one—is that it does not want to coöperate. This mouse had nothing going for him, and yet he struggled, using what, I don't really know. I tried to hold him down with a broom handle, but it wasn't the right tool for the job, and he kept breaking free and heading back to the surface. A creature that determined, you want to let it have its way, but this was for the best, whether he realized it or not. I'd just managed to pin his tail to the bottom of the bucket when the van drove up and stopped in front of the house. I say van, but it was more like a miniature bus, with windows and three rows of seats. The headlights were on high, and the road before them appeared black and perfect.

After a moment or two, the driver's window rolled down, and a man stuck his head into the pool of light spilling from the porch. "*Bonsoir,*" he called. He said it the way a man in a lifeboat might yell "Ahoy" to a passing ship, giving the impression that he was very happy to see me. As he opened the door, a light came on, and I could see five people seated behind him, two men and three women, each looking at me with the same expression of relief. All were adults, perhaps in their sixties or early seventies, and all of them had white hair.

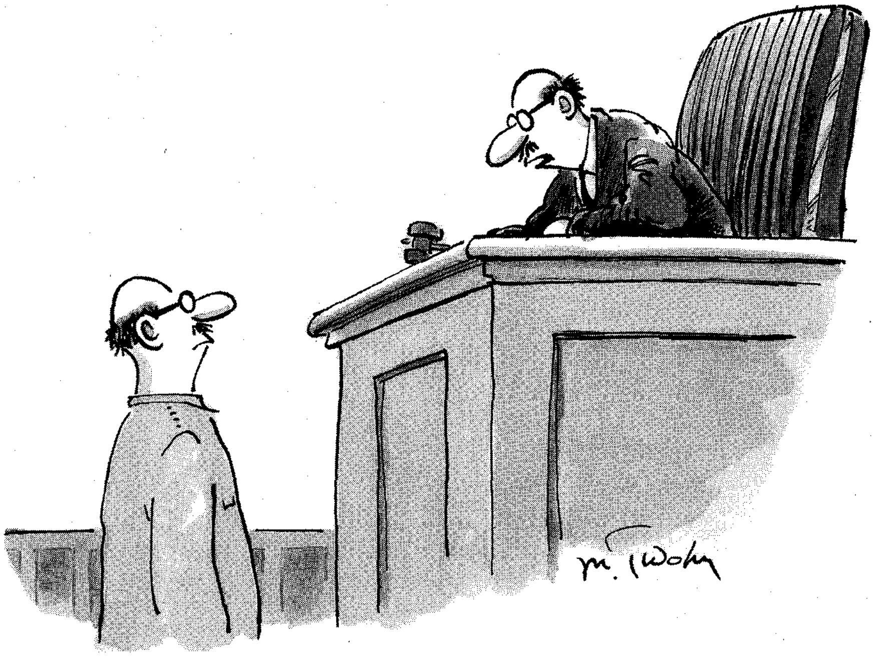
The driver referred to a small book he held in his hand. Then he looked back at me and attempted to recite what he had just read. It was French, but just barely, pronounced phonetically, with no understanding of where the accents lay.

"Do you speak English?" I asked.

The man clapped his hands and turned around in his seat. "He speaks English!" The news was greeted with a great deal of excitement, and then translated for one of the women, who apparently did not understand its significance. Meanwhile my mouse had popped back to the surface, and was using his good hand to claw at the sides of the bucket.

"We are looking for a particular place," the driver said, "a house we are renting with friends." He spoke loudly and with a slight accent. Dutch, I thought, or maybe Scandinavian.

I asked what town the house was in, and he said that it was not in a town, just a willage.



*"I'm going to have to recuse myself."*

"A what?"

"A willage," he repeated.

Either he had a speech impediment or the letter "V" did not exist in his native language. Whatever the case, I wanted him to say it again.

"I'm sorry," I said. "But I couldn't quite hear you."

"A *willage,*" he said. "Some friends have rented a house in a little willage and we can't seem to find it. We were supposed to be there hours ago, but now we are quite lost. Do you know the area?"

I said that I did, but drew a blank when he called out the name. There are countless small villages in our part of Normandy, clusters of stone buildings hidden by forests or knotted at the end of unpaved roads. Hugh might have known the place the man was looking for, but because I don't drive I tend not to pay too much attention. "I have a map," the man said. "Do you perhaps think you could look at it?"

He stepped from the van and I saw that he was wearing a white nylon tracksuit, the pants puffy and gathered tight at the ankles. You'd expect to find sneakers attached to such an outfit, but instead he wore a pair of black loafers. The front gate was open, and as he made his way up the stairs I remembered what it was that I'd been doing, and I thought of how strange it might look. It occurred to me to meet the man halfway, but by this time he had already reached the landing, and was offering his hand in a gesture of friendship. We shook and, on hearing the faint, lapping noise, he squinted down into the bucket. "Oh," he said. "I see that you have a little swimming mouse." His tone did not invite explanation, and so I offered none. "My wife and I have a dog," he continued. "But we did not bring it with us. Too much trouble."

I nodded and he held out his map, a Xerox of a Xerox marked with arrows and annotated in a language I did not recognize. "I think I've got something better in the house," I said, and at my invitation he followed me inside.

An unexpected and unknown visitor allows you to see a familiar place as if for the first time. I'm thinking of the meter reader rooting through the kitchen at 8 A.M., the Jehovah's Witness suddenly in your living room. "Here," they seem to

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say. "Use my eyes. The focus is much keener." I had always thought of our main room as cheerful, but walking through the door I saw that I was mistaken. It wasn't dirty or messy, but there was something slightly suspicious about it. I looked at the Visible Man spread out on the table. The pieces lay in the shadow of a large taxidermied chicken, which seemed to be regarding them, determining which organ might be the most appetizing. The table itself was pleasant to look at—oak, and hand-hewn—but the chairs surrounding it were mismatched, and in various states of disrepair. On the back of one hung a towel marked with the emblem of the Los Angeles County Coroner's office. It had been a gift, not bought personally, but, still, it was there, leading the eye to an adjacent daybed, upon which lay two copies of a sordid true-crime magazine I buy, purportedly to help me with my French. The cover of the latest issue pictured a young Belgian woman, a camper beaten to death with a cinder block. "IS THERE A SERIAL KILLER IN *YOUR* REGION?" the headline asked. The second copy was opened to the crossword puzzle I'd attempted earlier in the evening. One of the clues translated to "Female sex organ," and in the space provided I had written the word for vagina. It was the first time I had ever answered a French crossword-puzzle question, and in celebration I had marked the margins with bright exclamation points.

There seemed to be a theme developing, and everything I saw appeared to substantiate it: the almanac of guns and firearms suddenly prominent on the bookshelf, the meat cleaver lying, for no apparent reason, upon a photograph of our neighbor's grandchild.

"It's more of a summer home," I said, and the man nodded. He was looking now at the fireplace, which was slightly taller than he was. I tend to see only the solid stone hearth and high oak mantel, but he was examining the meat hooks hanging from the clotted black interior.

"Every other house we passed was dark," he said. "We've been driving, I think, for hours, just looking for someone who was awake. We saw your lights, the open door . . ." His words were familiar from innumerable horror movies, the wayward soul announcing himself to the count, the mad scientist, the werewolf moments before he changes.

## FIRST LOVE

They say
the first love's most important.
That's very romantic,
but not my experience.

Something was and wasn't there between us,
something went on and went away.

My hands never tremble
when I stumble on silly keepsakes
and a sheaf of letters tied with string—
not even ribbon.

Our only meeting after years:
the conversation of two chairs
at a chilly table.

Other loves
still breathe deep inside me.
This one's too short of breath even to sigh.

Yet, just exactly as it is,
it does what the others still can't manage:
unremembered,
not even seen in dreams,
it introduces me to death.

—*Wislawa Szymborska*

*(Translated, from the Polish, by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh.)*

*"I hate to bother you, really."*

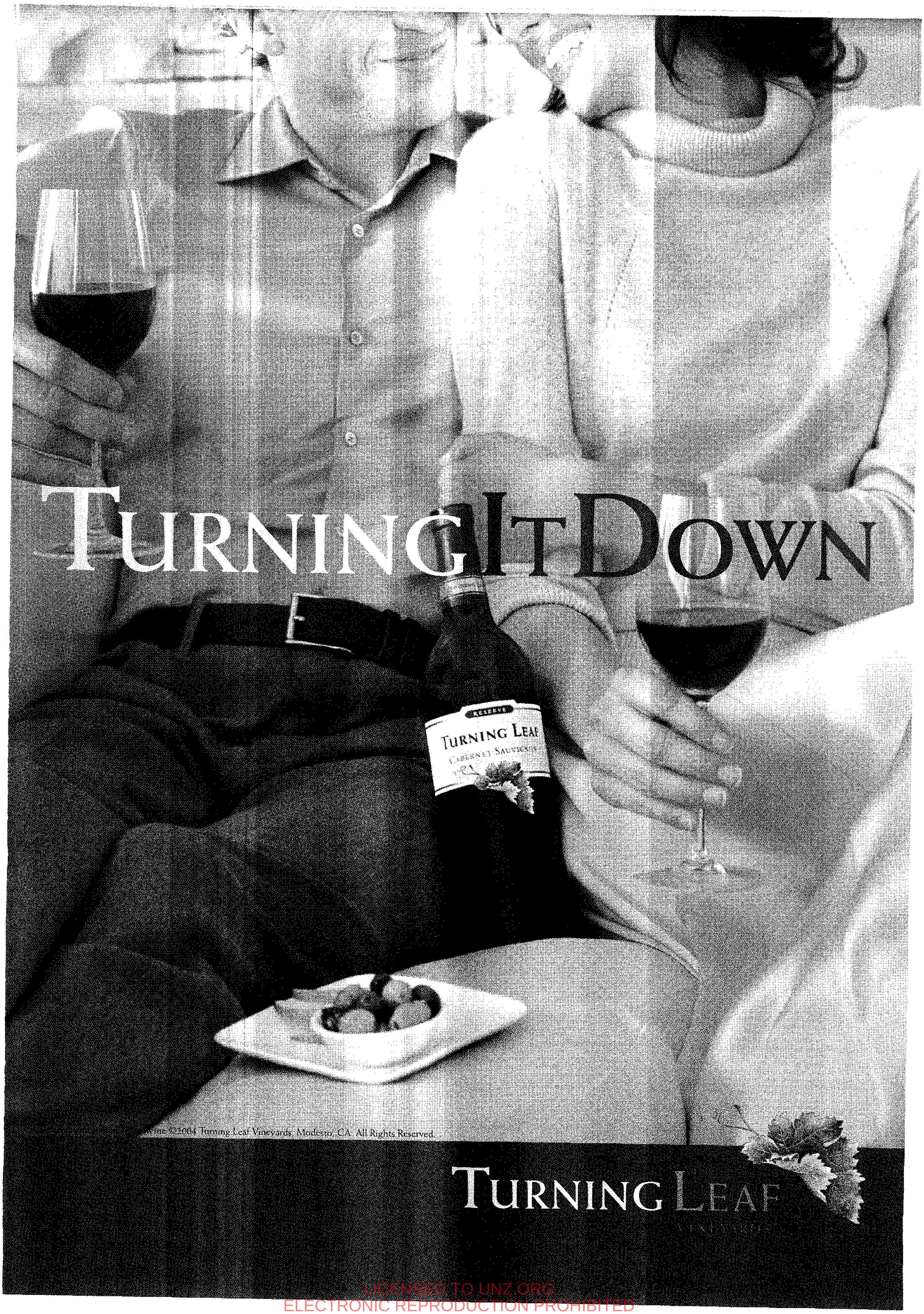
*"Oh, it's no bother, I was just drowning a mouse. Come in, please."*

"So," the man said. "You say you have a map?"

I had several, and pulled the most detailed from a drawer containing, among other things, a short length of rope and a novelty pen resembling a dismembered finger. *Where does all this stuff come from?* I asked myself. There's a low cabinet beside the table, and, pushing aside the delicate skull of a baby monkey, I spread the map upon the surface, identifying the road outside our house, and then the village the man was looking for. It wasn't more than ten miles away. The route between here and there was fairly simple, but still I offered him the map, knowing he would feel better if he could refer to it on the road.

"Oh, no," he said, "I couldn't," but I insisted, and watched from the porch as he carried it down the stairs, and into the idling van. "If you have any problems you know where I live," I said. "You and your friends can spend the night here if you like. Really, I mean it. I have plenty of beds." The man in the tracksuit waved goodbye, and then he drove down the hill, disappearing behind the neighbor's pitched roof.

The mouse that had fought so hard against my broom handle had lost his second wind, and was floating, lifeless now, on the surface of the water. I thought of emptying the bucket into the field behind the house, but, without the van, its headlights, and the comforting sound of the engine, the area beyond the porch seemed too menacing. The inside of the house suddenly seemed just as bad, and so I stood there, looking out at what I'd now think of as my willage. When the sun came up I would bury my dead, and fill the empty bucket with hydrangeas, a bit of life and color, so perfect for the table. So pleasing to the eye. ♦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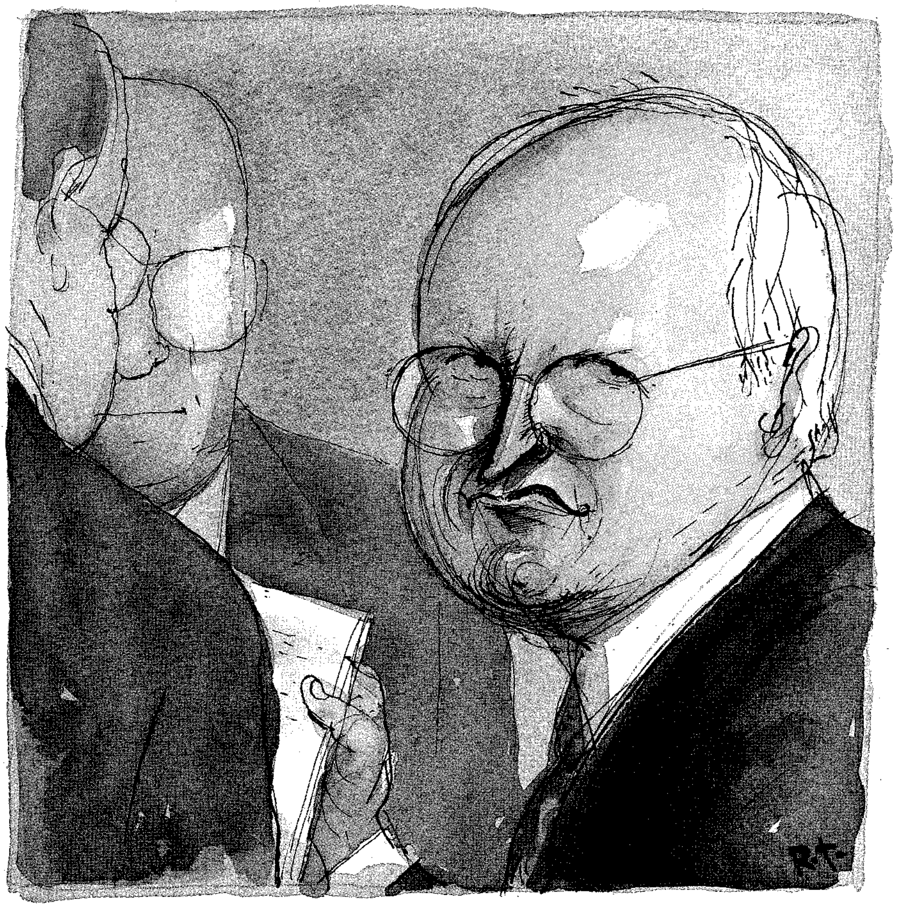
LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

# CONTRACT SPORT

*What did the Vice-President do for Halliburton?*

BY JANE MAYER



*Cheney was the firm's "outside man"—someone who could help it grow around the globe.*

RICHARD THOMPSON

Vice-President Dick Cheney is well known for his discretion, but his official White House biography, as posted on his Web site, may exceed even his own stringent standards. It traces the sixty-three years from his birth, in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1941, through college and graduate school, and describes his increasingly powerful jobs in Washington. Yet one chapter of Cheney's life is missing. The record notes that he has been a "businessman" but fails to mention the five extraordinarily lucrative years that he spent, immediately before becoming Vice-President, as chief executive of Halliburton, the world's largest oil-and-gas-services company. The conglomerate, which is based in Houston, is now the biggest private contractor for American forces in Iraq; it has received contracts worth some eleven billion dollars for its work there.

Cheney earned forty-four million dollars during his tenure at Halliburton. Although he has said that he "severed all my ties with the company," he continues to collect deferred compensation worth approximately a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, and he retains stock options worth more than eighteen million dollars. He has announced that he will donate proceeds from the stock options to charity.

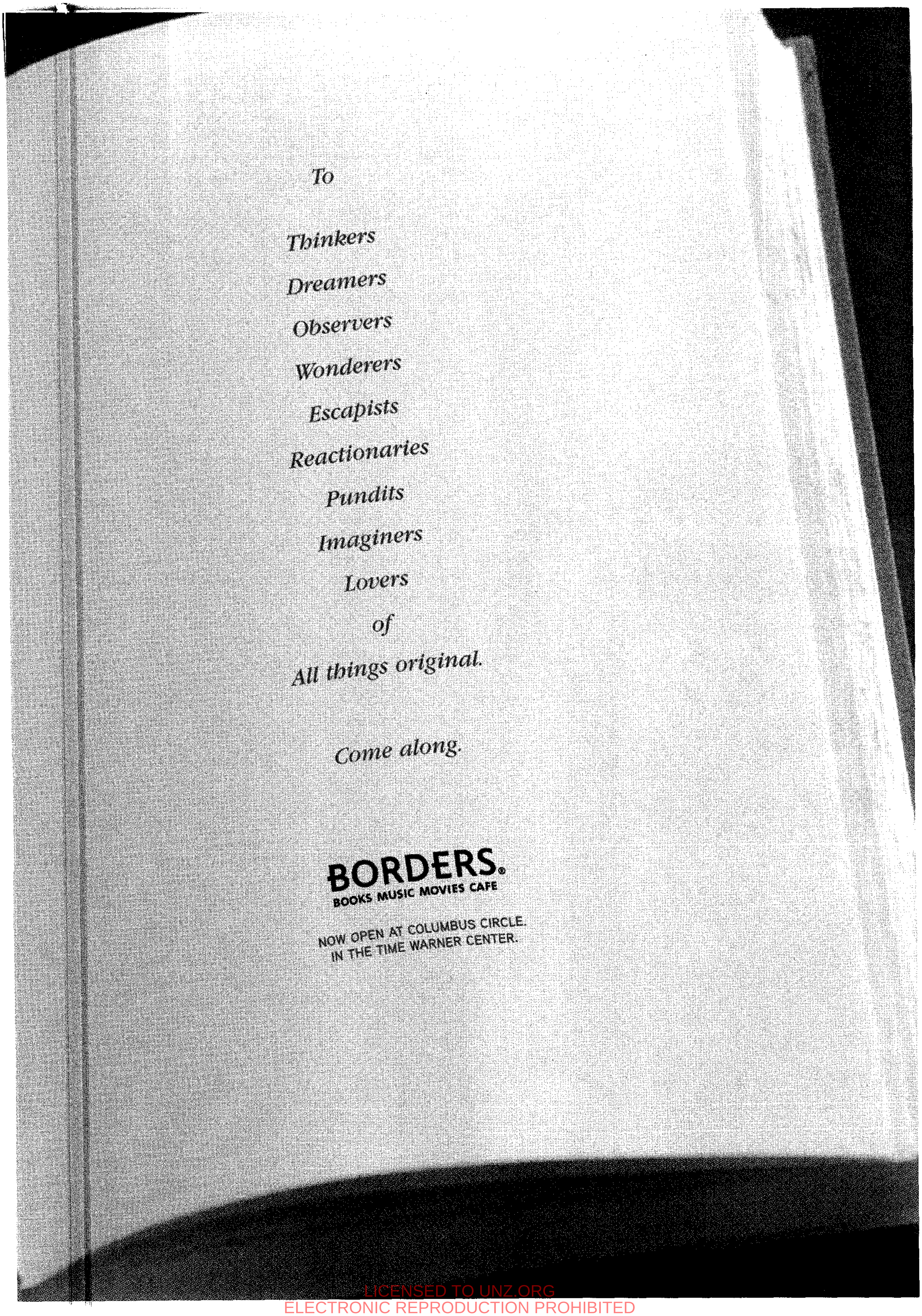
Such actions have not quelled criticism. Halliburton has become a favorite target for Democrats, who use it as shorthand for a host of doubts about conflicts of interest, undue corporate influence, and hidden motives behind Bush Administration policy—in particular, its reasons for going to war in Iraq. Like Dow Chemical during the Vietnam War, or Enron three years ago, Halliburton has evolved into a symbol useful in rallying the opposition. On the night that John Kerry won the Iowa caucuses, he took a ritual swipe at the Administration's "open hand" for Halliburton.

For months, Cheney and Halliburton have insisted that he had no part in the government's decision about the Iraq contracts. Cheney has stuck by a statement he made last September on "Meet the Press": "I have absolutely no influence of, involvement of, knowledge of in any way, shape, or form of contracts led by the Corps of Engineers or anybody else in the federal government." He has declined to discuss Halliburton in depth, and, despite a number of recent media appearances meant to soften his public image, he turned down several requests for an interview on the subject. Cheney's spokesman, Kevin Kellems, responded to questions by e-mail.

Representative Henry Waxman, a liberal Democrat from California and the ranking minority member of the House Committee on Government Reform, has argued aggressively that the Bush Administration has left many questions about Halliburton unanswered. Last year, for example, a secret task force in the Bush Administration picked Halliburton to receive a noncompetitive contract for up to seven billion dollars to rebuild Iraq's oil operations. According to the *Times*, the decision was authorized at the "highest levels of the Administration." In an interview, Waxman asked, "Whose decision was it? Was it made outside the regular channels of the procurement process? We know that Halliburton got very special treatment. What we don't know is why."

Halliburton has been accused of exploiting its privileged status. Last year, a division of the company overcharged the government by as much as sixty-one million dollars in the course of buying and transporting fuel from Kuwait into Iraq. Halliburton charged the United States as much as $2.38 per gallon, an amount that a Pentagon audit determined to be about a dollar per gallon too high. Although Halliburton has denied any criminal wrongdoing, the inspector general for the Department of Defense is considering an investigation.

Halliburton blamed the high costs on



*To*

*Thinkers*
*Dreamers*
*Observers*
*Wonderers*
*Escapists*
*Reactionaries*
*Pundits*
*Imaginers*
*Lovers*
*of*
*All things original.*

*Come along.*

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an obscure Kuwaiti firm, Altanmia Commercial Marketing, which it subcontracted to deliver the fuel. In Kuwait, the oil business is controlled by the state, and Halliburton has claimed that government officials there pressured it into hiring Altanmia, which had no experience in fuel transport. Yet a previously undisclosed letter, dated May 4, 2003, and sent from an American contracting officer to Kuwait's oil minister, plainly describes the decision to use Altanmia as Halliburton's own "recommendation." The letter also shows that the Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency that oversees such transactions, supported Halliburton's decision to use the expensive subcontractor—which may explain why it has been reluctant to criticize the deal.

Scott Saunders, a spokesman for the Army Corps of Engineers, confirmed the authenticity of the letter, and acknowledged that Halliburton had picked Altanmia. "Halliburton told us that only Altanmia could meet our requirements," he said.

Experts in the Persian Gulf oil business say that the Altanmia deal looks suspicious. "There is not a reason on earth to sell gasoline at the price they did," Youssef Ibrahim, the managing director of the Strategic Energy Investment Group, a consulting firm in Dubai, said. "Halliburton and their Kuwaiti partners made out like bandits." A well-informed Kuwaiti source called the prices charged by Altanmia "absurd," and said that Halliburton's arrangement to buy Kuwaiti oil through a middleman, rather than directly from the government, was "highly irregular." He added, "There is no way that this could have transpired without the knowledge and direction" of Kuwait's oil minister, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah. Two sources told me that the oil minister's brother, Talal Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, may have secret financial ties to Altanmia. (The brothers are also nephews of the Emir and the Prime Minister of Kuwait.) "There are calls in parliament to open an investigation," the Kuwaiti source said. "It could shake the government."

Halliburton, meanwhile, is contending with two new scandals. Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the company had overcharged the government by sixteen million dollars on a bill for the cost of feeding troops at a military base in Kuwait. And last month the company made an astonishing confession: two of its employees, it said, had taken kickbacks resulting in overcharges of $6.3 million, in return for hiring a different Kuwaiti subcontractor in Iraq. Halliburton said that the employees, whose names it declined to reveal, had been fired and the funds returned. The day after this disclosure, the Pentagon awarded yet another contract to Halliburton, worth $1.2 billion, to rebuild the oil industry in southern Iraq.

Defenders of Halliburton deny that it has been politically favored, arguing that very few other companies could have handled these complex jobs. As Cheney said last September on "Meet the Press," "Halliburton is a unique kind of company. There are very few companies out there that have the combination of very large engineering construction capability and significant oil-field services." Dan Guttman, a fellow at Johns Hopkins University, agrees with Cheney's assessment, but sees Halliburton's dominance as part of a wider problem—one that has reached a crisis point in Iraq. After years of cutting government jobs in favor of hiring private firms, he said, "contractors have become so big and entrenched that it's a fiction that the government maintains any control." He wasn't surprised that Halliburton's admission of wrongdoing in Kuwait had failed to harm its position in Washington. "What can the government say—'Stop right there'?" Guttman said of Halliburton. "They're half done rebuilding Iraq."

The Vice-President has not been connected directly to any of Halliburton's current legal problems. Cheney's spokesman said that the Vice-President "does not have knowledge of the contracting disputes beyond what has appeared in newspapers." Yet, in a broader sense, Cheney does bear some responsibility. He has been both an architect and a beneficiary of the increasingly close relationship between the Department of Defense and an élite group of private military contractors—a relationship that has allowed companies such as Halliburton to profit enormously. As a government official and as Halliburton's C.E.O., he has long argued that the commercial marketplace can provide better and cheaper services than a government bureaucracy. He has also been an advocate of limiting government regulation of the private sector. His vision has been fully realized: in 2002, more than a hundred and fifty billion

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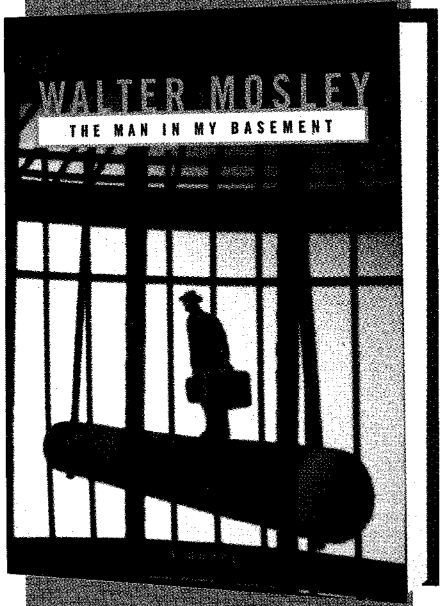
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dollars of public money was transferred from the Pentagon to private contractors.

According to Peter W. Singer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution and the author of "Corporate Warriors," published last year, "We're turning the lifeblood of our defense over to the marketplace." Advocates of privatization, who have included fiscally minded Democrats as well as Republicans, have argued that competition in the marketplace is the best way to control costs. But Steven Kelman, a professor of public management at Harvard, notes that the competition for Iraq contracts is unusually low. "On battlefield support, there are only a few companies that are willing and able to do the work," he said. Moreover, critics such as Waxman point out that public accountability is being sacrificed. "We can't even find out how much Halliburton charges to do the laundry," Waxman said. "It's inexcusable that they should keep this information from the Congress, and the people."

Unlike government agencies, private contractors can resist Freedom of Information Act requests and are insulated from direct congressional oversight. Jan Schakowsky, a Democratic representative from Illinois, told me, "It's almost as if these private military contractors are involved in a secret war." Private companies, she noted, can conceal details of their missions from public scrutiny in the name of protecting trade secrets. They are also largely exempt from salary caps and government ethics rules designed to protect policy from being polluted by politics. The Hatch Act, for example, forbids most government employees from giving money to political campaigns.

Halliburton has no such constraints. The company made political contributions of more than seven hundred thousand dollars between 1999 and 2002, almost always to Republican candidates or causes. In 2000, it donated $17,677 to the Bush-Cheney campaign. Indeed, the seventy or so companies that have Iraq contracts have contributed more money to President Bush than they did to any other candidate during the past twelve years.

Sam Gardiner, a retired Air Force colonel who has taught at the National War College, told me that so many of the contracts in Iraq are going to companies with personal connections with the Bush Administration that the procurement process has essentially become a "patronage system." Major Joseph Yoswa, a Department of Defense spokesman, denied this. He told me that multiple safeguards exist to insure that the department's procurement process for Iraq contracts is free of favoritism. Most important, he said, career civil servants, not political appointees, make final decisions on contracts.

Gardiner remains unconvinced. "The system is sick," he told me. Cheney, he added, can't see the problem. "He doesn't see the difference between public and private interest," he said.

George Sigalos, a Halliburton executive, recently gave a speech at a conference in Washington for businesspeople who hoped to obtain government contracts in Iraq. Many in the crowd had

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paid nearly four hundred dollars to attend, drawn by descriptions of Iraq as "the next Klondike," as James Clad, an official with the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation, a federal agency, put it. Sigalos began by pointing out that private contractors supplied the bullets that the Continental Army used in the American Revolution. "This didn't begin with Halliburton," he said.

Halliburton's construction-and-engineering subsidiary, Brown & Root Services, started working with the U.S. military decades before Cheney joined the firm. Founded in Texas, in 1919, by two brothers, George and Herman Brown, and their brother-in-law, Dan Root, the firm grew from supervising small road-paving projects to building enormously complex oil platforms, dams, and Navy warships. The company's engineering feats were nearly matched by its talent for political patronage. As Robert A. Caro noted in his biography of Lyndon Johnson, Brown & Root had a symbiotic relationship with L.B.J.: the company served as a munificent sponsor of his political campaigns, and in return was rewarded with big government contracts. In 1962, Brown & Root sold out to Halliburton, a booming oil-well construction-and-services firm, and in the following years the conglomerate grew spectacularly. According to Dan Briody, who has written a book on the subject, Brown & Root was part of a consortium of four companies that built about eighty-five per cent of the infrastructure needed by the Army during the Vietnam War. At the height of the resistance to the war, Brown & Root became a target of protesters, and soldiers in Vietnam derided it as Burn & Loot.

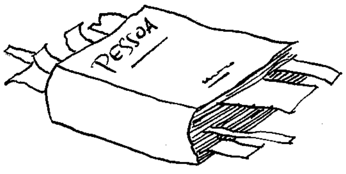
Around this time, in 1968, Dick Cheney arrived in Washington. He was a political-science graduate student who had won a congressional fellowship with Bill Steiger, a Republican from his home state of Wyoming. One of Cheney's first assignments was to visit college campuses where antiwar protests were disrupting classes, and quietly assess the scene. Steiger was part of a group of congressmen who were considering ways to cut off federal funding to campuses where violent protests had broken out. It was an early lesson in the strategic use of government cutbacks.

Instead of returning to graduate school, Cheney got a job as the deputy for a brash congressional colleague of Steiger's, Donald Rumsfeld, whom Richard Nixon had appointed to head the Office of Economic Opportunity. The O.E.O., which had played a prominent role in Johnson's War on Poverty, was not favored by Nixon. According to Dan Guttman, who co-wrote "The Shadow Government" (1976), Rumsfeld and Cheney diminished the power of the office by outsourcing many of its jobs. Their tactics were not subtle. At nine o'clock on the morning of September 17, 1969, Rumsfeld distributed a new agency phone directory; without explanation, a hundred and eight employee names had been dropped. The vast majority were senior career civil servants who had been appointed by Democrats.

The purging of the office was a mixed success. Bureaucratic resistance stymied Cheney and Rumsfeld on several fronts. But by the time Ronald Reagan became President the overriding principle that had guided their actions at the O.E.O.—privatization—had become a central precept of the conservative movement.

For most of the eighties, Cheney served in the House of Representatives. In 1988, after the election of George H. W. Bush, he was named Secretary of Defense. The end of the Cold War brought with it expectations of a "peace dividend," and Cheney's mandate was to reduce forces, cut weapons systems, and close military bases. Predictably, this plan met with opposition from every member of Congress whose district had a base in peril.

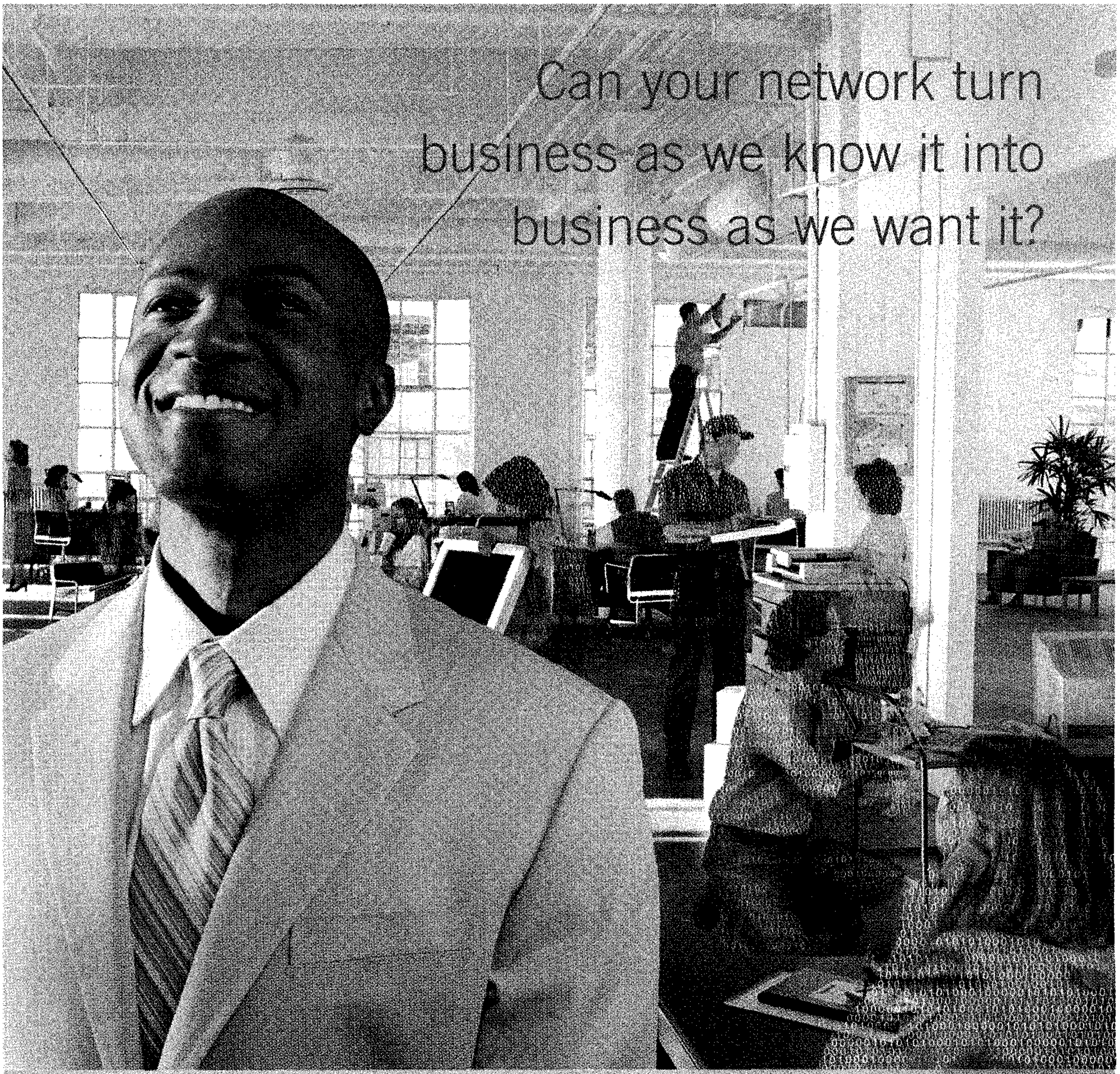
Cheney was widely admired for his judicious handling of the matter. By the time he was done, the armed forces were at their lowest level since the Korean War. However, a Democratic aide on the House Armed Services Committee during those years told me that "contrary to his public image, which was as a reasonable, quiet, soft-spoken, and inclusive personality, Cheney was a rank partisan." The aide said that Cheney practiced downsizing as political jujitsu. He once compiled a list of military bases to be closed; all were in Democratic districts. Cheney's approach to cutting weapons systems was similar: he proposed breathtaking cuts in the districts of Thomas Downey, David Bonior, and Jim Wright, all high-profile Democrats. The aide told me that Congress, which was then dominated by the Democrats, beat back most of Cheney's plans, because many of the cuts made no strategic sense. "This was about getting even," he said of Cheney. Cheney's spokesman disputed this account, saying that the armed services had specified which bases should be cut, and "Congress approved it without changes."



As Defense Secretary, Cheney developed a contempt for Congress, which, a friend said, he came to regard as "a bunch of annoying gnats." Meanwhile, his affinity for business deepened. "The meetings with businessmen were the ones that really got him pumped," a former aide said. One company that did exceedingly well was Halliburton. Toward the end of Cheney's tenure, the Pentagon decided to turn over to a single company the bulk of the business of planning and providing support for military operations abroad—tasks such as preparing food, doing the laundry, and cleaning the latrines. As Singer writes in "Corporate Warriors," the Pentagon commissioned Halliburton to do a classified study of how this might work. In effect, the company was being asked to create its own market.

Halliburton was paid $3.9 million to write its initial report, which offered a strategy for providing support to twenty thousand troops. The Pentagon then paid Halliburton five million dollars more to do a follow-up study. In August, 1992, Halliburton was selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do all the work needed to support the military during the next five years, in accordance with the plan it had itself drawn up. The Pentagon had never relied so heavily on a single company before. Although the profit margins for this omnibus government contract were narrower than they were for private-sector jobs, there was a guaranteed profit of one per cent, with the possibility of as much as nine per cent—making it a rare bit of business with no risk.

In December, 1992, working under its new contract, Halliburton began providing assistance to the United States troops overseeing the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. Few other companies in the world could have mobilized as fast or as well. Halliburton employees were on the ground within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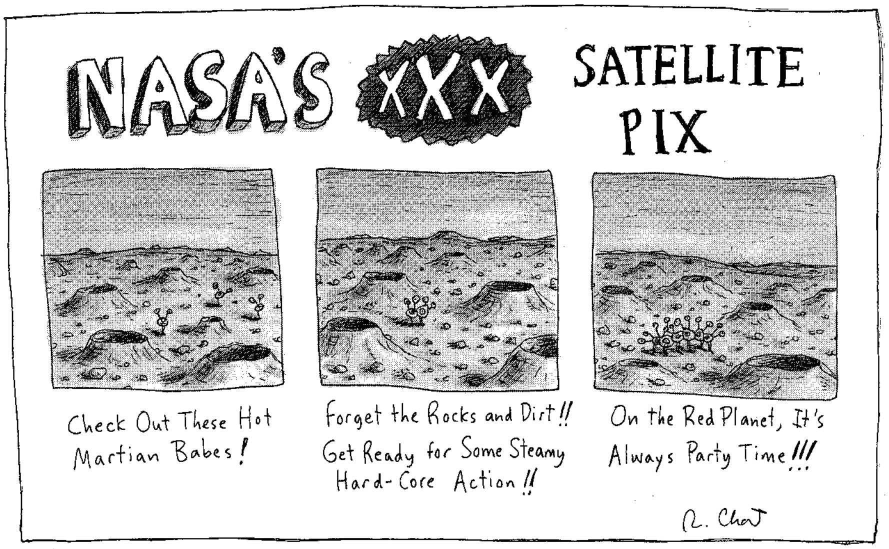
twenty-four hours of the first U.S. landing in Mogadishu. By the time Halliburton left, in 1995, it had become the largest employer in the country, having subcontracted out most of the menial work, while importing experts for more specialized needs. (A mortician was hired, for example, to clean up the bodies of the slain soldiers.) For its services in Somalia, Halliburton was paid a hundred and nine million dollars. Over the next five years, the company billed the government $2.2 billion for similar work in the Balkans.

Halliburton's efforts in the field were considered highly effective. Yet Sam Gardiner, the retired Air Force colonel, told me that the success of private contractors in the battlefield has had an unforeseen consequence at the Pentagon. “It makes it too easy to go to war,” he said. “When you can hire people to go to war, there's none of the grumbling and the political friction.” He noted that much of the scut work now being contracted out to firms like Halliburton was traditionally performed by reserve soldiers, who often complain the loudest.

There are some hundred and thirty-five thousand American troops in Iraq, but Gardiner estimated that there would be as many as three hundred thousand if not for private contractors. He said, “Think how much harder it would have been to get Congress, or the American public, to support those numbers.”

After Cheney's tenure at the Pentagon ended, in 1993, with the arrival of the Clinton Administration, he spent much of the next two years deciding whether to run for President. He formed a political-action committee, and crossed the country making speeches and raising money. He also became affiliated with the American Enterprise Institute, the conservative think tank. Records from the Federal Election Commission show that Cheney's PAC contributors included executives at several of the companies that have since won the largest government contracts in Iraq. Among them were Thomas Cruikshank, Halliburton's C.E.O. at the time; Stephen Bechtel, whose family's construction-and-engineering firm now has a contract in Iraq worth as much as $2.8 billion; and Duane Andrews, then senior vice-president of Science Applications International Corporation, which has won seven contracts in Iraq.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When Newt Gingrich helped bring the House of Representatives into Republican hands, in 1994, Cheney felt reassured that the country was back on the right track, alleviating his need to run. His PAC hadn't raised enough money, in any case. Equally important, colleagues said, Cheney had found that he didn't enjoy being the center of attention. He preferred to work behind the scenes.

Cheney was hired by Halliburton in 1995, not long after he went on a fly-fishing trip in New Brunswick, Canada, with several corporate moguls. After Cheney had said good night, the others began talking about Halliburton's need for a new C.E.O. Why not Dick? He had virtually no business experience, but he had valuable relationships with very powerful people. Lawrence Eagleburger, the Secretary of State in the first Bush Administration, became a Halliburton board member after Cheney joined the company. He told me that Cheney was the firm's “outside man,” the person who could best help the company expand its business around the globe. Cheney was close to many world leaders, particularly in the Persian Gulf, a region central to Halliburton's oil-services business. Cheney and his wife, Lynne, were so friendly with Prince Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., that the Prince had invited the Cheney family to his daughter's wedding. (Cheney did not attend.) “Dick was good at opening doors,” Eagleburger said. “I don't mean that pejoratively. He had contacts from his former life, and he used them effectively.”

Under Cheney's direction, Halliburton thrived. In 1998, the company acquired its main rival, Dresser Industries. Cheney negotiated the $7.7-billion deal, reportedly during a weekend of quail-hunting. The combined conglomerate, which retained the Halliburton name, instantly became the largest company of its kind in the world. But, in its eagerness to merge, Halliburton had failed to detect the size of the legal liability that Dresser faced from long-dormant lawsuits dealing with asbestos poisoning. The claims proved so ruinous that several Halliburton divisions later filed for bankruptcy protection. The asbestos settlements devastated the company's stock price, which fell by eighty per cent in just over a year.

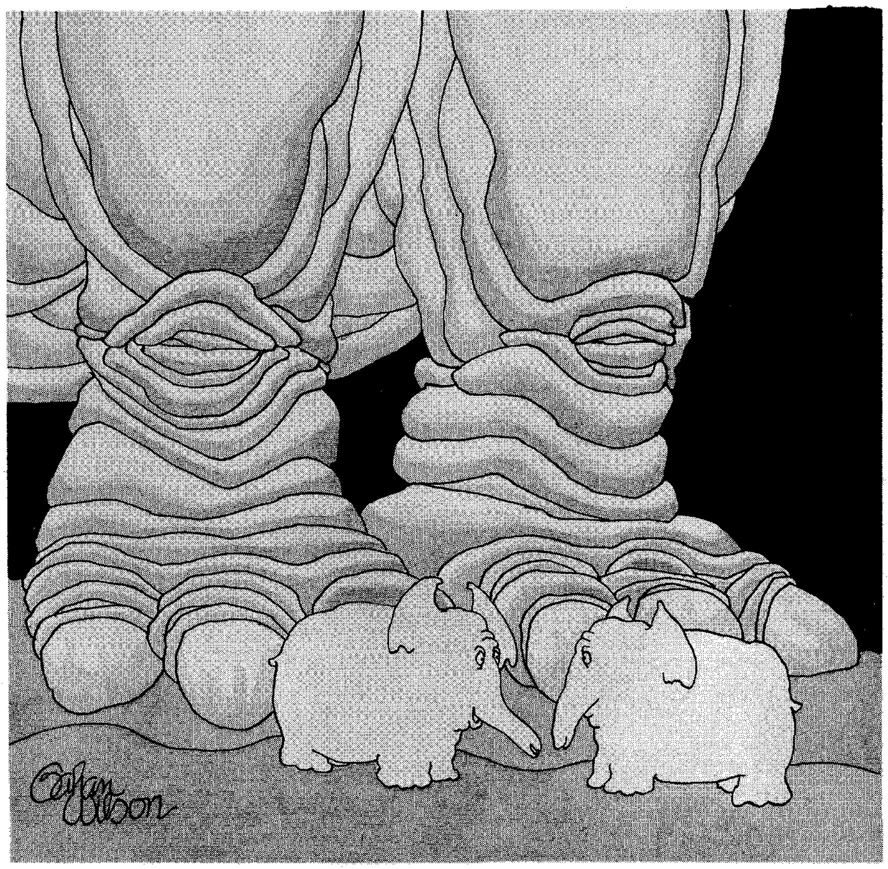
Cheney's defenders have argued that no one could have anticipated the extent of the asbestos problem. Yet the incident presaged a current criticism of Cheney: that he can be blindsided by insular decision-making. Eagleburger, who was on Dresser's board of directors before it merged with Halliburton, told me, “I can't fault Cheney as such on asbestos, but somebody slipped up somewhere in the due diligence. Somebody should have caught it.”

The Dresser merger also raised ethical questions. The United States had concluded that Iraq, Libya, and Iran supported terrorism and had imposed strict sanctions on them. Yet during Cheney's tenure at Halliburton the company did business in all three countries. In the case of Iraq, Halliburton legally evaded U.S. sanctions by conducting its oil-service business through foreign subsidiaries that had once been owned by Dresser. With Iran and Libya, Halliburton used its own subsidiaries. The use of foreign subsidiaries may have helped the company to avoid paying U.S. taxes.

In some ways, the Libya and Iran transactions were consistent with Cheney's views. He had long opposed economic sanctions as a political tool, even against South Africa's apartheid regime. During the 2000 campaign, however, Cheney said he viewed Iraq differently. "I had a firm policy that we wouldn't do anything in Iraq, even arrangements that were supposedly legal," he told ABC News. But, under Cheney's watch, two foreign subsidiaries of Dresser sold millions of dollars' worth of oil services and parts to Saddam's regime. The transactions were not illegal, but they were politically suspect. The deals occurred under the United Nations Oil-for-Food program, at a time when Saddam Hussein chose which companies his government would work with. Corruption was rampant. It may be that it was simply Halliburton's expertise that attracted Saddam's regime, but a United Nations diplomat with the Oil-for-Food program has doubts. "Most American companies were blacklisted," he said. "It's rather surprising to find Halliburton doing business with Saddam. It would have been very much a senior-level decision, made by the regime at the top." Cheney has said that he personally directed the company to stop doing business with Saddam. Halliburton's presence in Iraq ended in February, 2000.

During the 2000 Vice-Presidential debate, Senator Joseph Lieberman teased Cheney about the fortune he had amassed at Halliburton. "I'm pleased to see, Dick, that *you're* better off than you were eight years ago," he said.

"I can tell you that the government had absolutely nothing to do with it," Cheney shot back. In fact, despite having spent years championing the private sector and disparaging big government, Cheney devoted himself at Halliburton to securing government funds. In the five years before Cheney joined Halliburton, the company received a hundred million dollars in government credit guarantees. During Cheney's tenure, this amount jumped to $1.5 billion. One alliance that Cheney worked hard to make was with the Export-Import Bank, in Washington; he won the support of James Harmon, a Clinton appointee and the bank's chairman. Harmon agreed to make a four-hundred-and-ninety-million-dollar loan guarantee to a Russian company that was drilling a huge oil field in Siberia. It was the largest loan guarantee to a Russian company in the bank's history, and a big chunk of it would facilitate the Russian company's purchase of Halliburton's services. There was a hitch, however: the Russian company, Tyumen Oil, was caught in a messy dispute with several competitors, all of whom accused the others of being corrupt.



*"What are you going to do when you become enormous?"*

Cheney was undeterred by these charges. But he almost lost the Export-Import loan when the State Department attempted to block it, on the ground that Tyumen was involved in illegal activity. According to a source who worked at the State Department at the time, Cheney personally lobbied the government in an effort to keep the deal alive. He was particularly incensed by the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency, which sided with the State Department. According to a friend of Cheney's, he was convinced that the C.I.A. had been duped by opposition research spread by Tyumen's rivals. Eventually, the deal went through. By then, though, Cheney's frustration with government had become profound. As he said in a speech in 1998, "The average Halliburton hand knows more about the world than the average member of Congress."

In the spring of 2000, Cheney's two worlds—commerce and politics—merged. Halliburton allowed its C.E.O. to serve simultaneously as the head of George W. Bush's Vice-Presidential search committee. At the time, Bush said that his main criterion for a running mate was "somebody who's not going to hurt you." Cheney demanded reams of documents from the candidates he considered. In the end, he picked himself—a move that his longtime friend Stuart Spencer recently described, with admiration, as "the most Machiavellian fucking thing I've ever seen."

One man who was especially pleased by Cheney's candidacy was Ahmed Chalabi, the Iraqi dissident who was the leading proponent of overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Cheney had come to know Chalabi through conservative circles in Washington. "I think he is good for us," Chalabi told a U.P.I. reporter in June, 2000.

For months there has been a debate in Washington about when the Bush Administration decided to go to war against Saddam. In Ron Suskind's recent book "The Price of Loyalty," former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill charges that Cheney agitated for U.S. intervention well before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Additional evidence that Cheney played an early planning role is contained in a previously undisclosed National Security Council document, dated February 3, 2001. The top-secret document, written by a high-level N.S.C. official, concerned Cheney's newly formed Energy Task Force. It directed the N.S.C. staff to coöperate fully with the Energy Task Force as it considered the "melding" of two seemingly unrelated areas of policy: "the review of operational policies towards rogue states," such as Iraq, and "actions regarding the capture of new and existing oil and gas fields."

A source who worked at the N.S.C. at the time doubted that there were links between Cheney's Energy Task Force and the overthrow of Saddam. But Mark Medish, who served as senior director for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian affairs at the N.S.C. during the Clinton Administration, told me that he regards the document as potentially "huge." He said, "People think Cheney's Energy Task Force has been secretive about domestic issues," referring to the fact that the Vice-President has been unwilling to reveal information about private task-force meetings that took place in 2001, when information was being gathered to help develop President Bush's energy policy. "But if this little group was discussing geostrategic plans for oil, it puts the issue of war in the context of the captains of the oil industry sitting down with Cheney and laying grand, global plans."

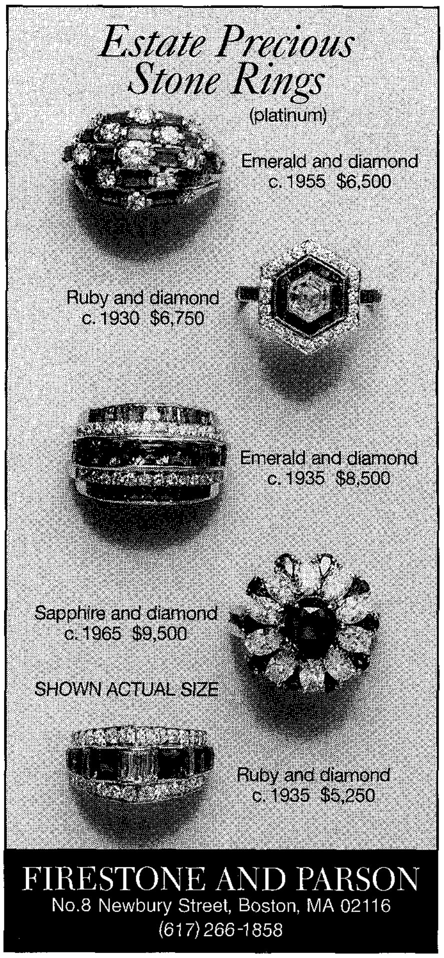
The Bush Administration's war on terror has became a source of substantial profit for Halliburton. The company's commercial ties to terrorist states did not prevent it from assuming a prominent role. The Navy, for instance, paid Halliburton thirty-seven million dollars to build prison camps in Cuba's Guantánamo Bay for suspected terrorists. The State Department gave the company a hundred-million-dollar contract to construct a new embassy in Kabul. And in December, 2001, a few years after having lost its omnibus military-support contract to a lower bidder, Halliburton won it back; before long, the company was supporting U.S. troops in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Djibouti, the Republic of Georgia, and Iraq. Halliburton's 2002 annual report describes counterterrorism as offering "growth opportunities."

The Department of Defense's decision to award Halliburton the seven-billion-dollar contract to restore Iraq's oil industry was made under "emergency" conditions. The company was secretly hired to draw up plans for how it would deal with putting out oil-well fires, should they occur during the war. This planning began in the fall of 2002, around the time that Congress was debating whether to grant President Bush the authority to use force, and before the United Nations had fully debated the issue. In early March, 2003, the Army quietly awarded Halliburton a contract to execute those plans.

As it turned out, oil-well fires were not a problem. An Army War College study shows that of the fifteen hundred oil wells in Iraq's two major oil fields, only nine were damaged during the war. Colonel Gardiner said he was puzzled by the Pentagon's inability to predict this outcome. "Our intelligence before the war was good enough to know that," he said.

After months spent trying to obtain more information about the classified Halliburton deals, Representative Waxman's staff discovered that the original oil-well-fire contract entrusted Halliburton with a full restoration of the Iraqi oil industry. "We thought it was supposed to be a short-term, small contract, but now it turns out Halliburton is restoring the entire oil infrastructure in Iraq," Waxman said. The Defense Department's only public acknowledgments of this wide-ranging deal had been two press releases announcing that it had asked Halliburton to prepare to help put out oil-well fires.

The most recent budget request provided by the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq mentions the building of a new oil refinery and the drilling of new wells. "They said originally they were just going to bring it up to prewar levels. Now they're getting money to dramatically *improve* it," Waxman complained. Who is going to own these upgrades,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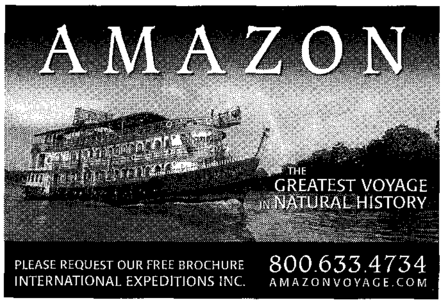
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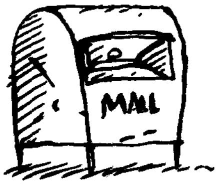
after the United States government has finished paying Halliburton to build them? "Who knows?" Waxman said. "Nobody is saying."

It is so complicated to secure an Iraq contract from the United States government that several big Washington law firms have gone into the business of shepherding applicants through the process. More than twenty billion dollars has been set aside for Iraqi relief and reconstruction projects, with work contracts being awarded by the Defense, State, and Commerce Departments, and by the U.S. Agency for International Development, in coördination with L. Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority. There's an additional five billion dollars sitting in the Development Fund for Iraq, also administered by the C.P.A. Officials at the C.P.A. say that contracts are awarded on the basis of competitive bidding, but rumors proliferate about political influence. When asked if connections helped, an executive whose firm has received several contracts replied, "Of course." One businessman with close ties to the Bush Administration told me, "Anything that has to do with Iraq policy, Cheney's the man to see. He's running it, the way that L.B.J. ran the space program."



Cheney's spokesman confirmed that the Vice-President speaks "on occasion" with officials at the C.P.A., and refers inquiries to the authority from third parties "expressing interest in getting involved in Iraq." The businessman offered an example of Cheney's backstage role. He said that Jack Kemp, the former Republican congressman and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, got help from Cheney with a venture involving Iraq. Last summer, the businessman said, Kemp had Cheney over for dinner, along with two sons of the President of the United Arab Emirates. In an interview, Kemp confirmed the event, and his business plans, but denied receiving any special assistance from Cheney. "It was just social," Kemp said. "We're old friends. We didn't talk about business." He acknowledged, however, that Cesar Conda, who until last fall was Cheney's domestic-policy adviser, was helping him with a study on how to fashion a public-private partnership plan to develop the Iraqi economy.

Kemp said that he is working on two business ventures in Iraq. He described the first project, a company called Free Market Global, as "an international company that trades in gas, petroleum, and other resources." Although Kemp provided only vague details about the project, he said, "I can tell you that General Tommy Franks has joined the advisory board of Free Market Global." Last year, General Franks commanded the invasion of Iraq.

Franks's lawyer, Marty Edelman, confirmed his client's participation: "That is correct. But it is my understanding that he won't be dealing with Iraq or the military for a year" (to comply with government ethics rules). Asked how Kemp and Franks had joined forces, Edelman said, "It seems like everyone on that level knows each other." Edelman himself is now on the advisory board of Free Market Global.

Kemp's second project, in which he said he would play an advisory role, is something called al-Ruba'yia. He describes it as a two-hundred-million-dollar fund to be invested in various ventures in Iraq, from energy to education. He is trying to attract American investors. Kemp is well positioned for this task: his political organization, Empower America, counts among its supporters some of the current Bush Administration's top figures. Donald Rumsfeld, for example, is a former board member. "It's like Russia," the businessman said. "This is how corruption is done these days. It's not about bribes. You just help your friends to get access. Cheney doesn't call the Defense Department and tell them, 'Pick Halliburton.' It's just having dinner with the right people."

So far, other than the irregularities at Halliburton, there has been no evidence of large-scale corruption in the rebuilding of Iraq. But a number of friends of the Administration have landed important positions, and others have obtained large contracts. For instance, Peter McPherson, who took a leave from his job as president of Michigan State University to serve as Paul Bremer's economic deputy in Iraq, has been friends with Cheney since they both served in Gerald Ford's White House. The head of private-sector development at the C.P.A., one of the most powerful posts in Iraq, is Thomas Foley, a Connecticut-based business-school classmate of President Bush, who later became finance chairman for Bush's Presidential campaign in Connecticut. Foley was a "pioneer," meaning that he raised more than a hundred thousand dollars for Bush.

Last month, an inspector general was appointed for the C.P.A., as required by Congress when it approved the President's eighty-seven-billion-dollar supplemental budget for Iraq last year. Rather than choosing a nonpartisan outsider for this watchdog role, as most government agencies do, the Administration selected Stuart Bowen, Jr., who spent two years as White House counsel in the Bush Administration. According to *The Hill*, a Washington newspaper, L. Marc Zell, a former law partner of Douglas Feith, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, is helping with international marketing for a concern called the Iraqi International Law Group. Billing itself as a group of lawyers and businessmen interested in helping investors in Iraq, the venture is run by Ahmed Chalabi's nephew Salem, who doubles as a legal adviser to Iraq's governing council, of which his uncle is a member.

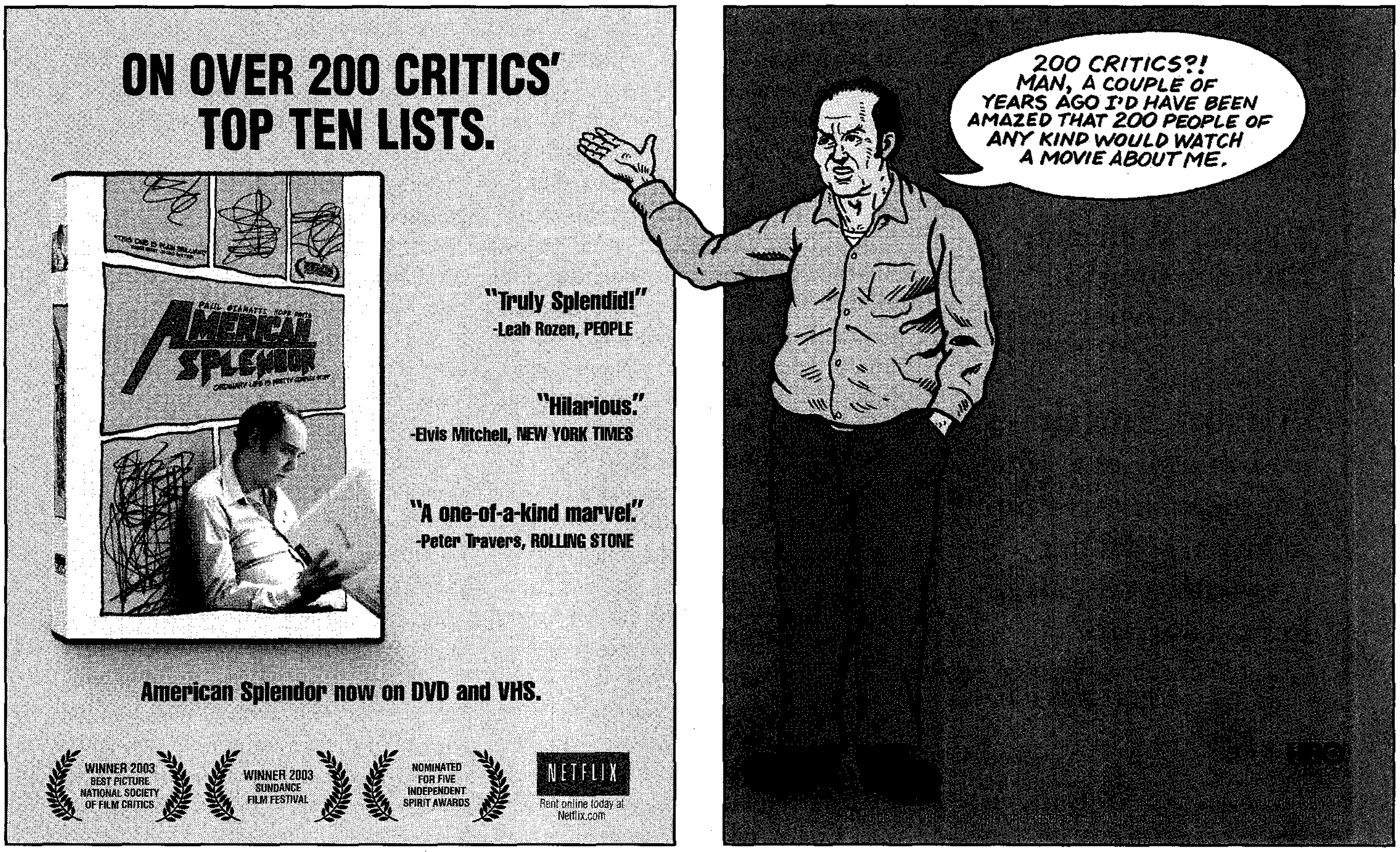
Tom Korologos, a well-connected Republican lobbyist in Washington, recently took a temporary assignment as a senior counsellor to Bremer. Korologos acknowledged that Washington lobbyists are scrambling to solicit business in Iraq. "By definition, it's going to boom, because of the numbers," he said. "The question is who's going to get the contracts. There's a lot of money. Somebody's got to build the bridges and roads." He added that talk of political influence over the process was "bullshit."

Yet a look at one prominent defense contractor, Science Applications International Corporation, based in San Diego, suggests the importance of connections. One of its board members is Army General Wayne Downing, who commanded the Special Forces in the first Gulf War and ran counterterrorism in the Bush White House for the better part of a year after September 11th. During that time, he accompanied Cheney on visits to the C.I.A. to discuss U.S. intelligence on Iraq. For years, Downing has been an unpaid adviser to Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress, and he was an early advocate of armed insurrection against the old Iraqi regime. S.A.I.C.'s seven Iraq contracts are worth fifty million dollars.

It is unclear what special expertise S.A.I.C. brings to several of its contracts. One company executive, who asked not to be named, said that its chief credential for setting up what was supposed to be an independent media for Iraq, modelled on the BBC, was military work in "informational warfare"—signal jamming, "perception management," and the like. Some of S.A.I.C.'s government contracts require that specific individuals—referred to as "executive management consultants"—be paid more than two hundred dollars an hour. One contract cites a man named Owen Kirby as someone who will advise Iraqis on the process of building democracy. Kirby is a program director of the International Republican Institute, an organization devoted to promoting democracy abroad. In October, 2001, the group gave its Freedom Award to Dick Cheney. Before that, it gave the award to Lynne Cheney.

It is not surprising that Cheney, after five years of running Halliburton, a company that considers war as providing "growth opportunities," regards winning the peace in Iraq as a challenge for private enterprise as well as for government. Yet it is reasonable to ask if Cheney's faith in companies like Halliburton contributed to his conviction that the occupation of Iraq would be a tidy, easily managed affair. Now that Cheney's vision has been shown to be overly optimistic, and Iraqis and American soldiers are still getting killed ten months after Saddam's overthrow, critics are questioning the propriety of a reconstruction effort that is fuelled by the profit motive. "I'm appalled that the war is being used by people close to the Bush Administration to make money for themselves," Waxman said. "At a time when we're asking young men and women to make perhaps the ultimate sacrifice, it's just unseemly." Many of those involved, however, see themselves as part of a democratic vanguard. Jack Kemp's spokesman, P. J. Johnson, told me, "We're doing good by doing well." Joe Allbaugh, Bush's former campaign manager, who has established New Bridge Strategies, a firm aimed specifically at setting up for-profit ventures in Iraq, makes no apologies. "We are proud of the leadership the American private sector is taking in the reconstruction of Iraq," he said.

Another top Republican lobbyist in Washington, Charlie Black, told me that his firm, BKSH & Associates, has plans to help Iraqis set up their own affiliated public-relations and government-relations firm; the company would become perhaps the first lobbying shop in Baghdad. Black is excited by the opportunities in Iraq, but he, too, has complaints. "The problem in Iraq so far is it's slow, and very confusing for people to figure out how to do business there," he said. "One week you go to Baghdad, and they say the decisions are being made at the Pentagon. Then you go to the Pentagon, and they say the decisions are being made in Baghdad. Only Halliburton is making money now!" He laughed. "Is there too much cronyism? I just wish I could find the cronies." ♦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PERSONAL HISTORY

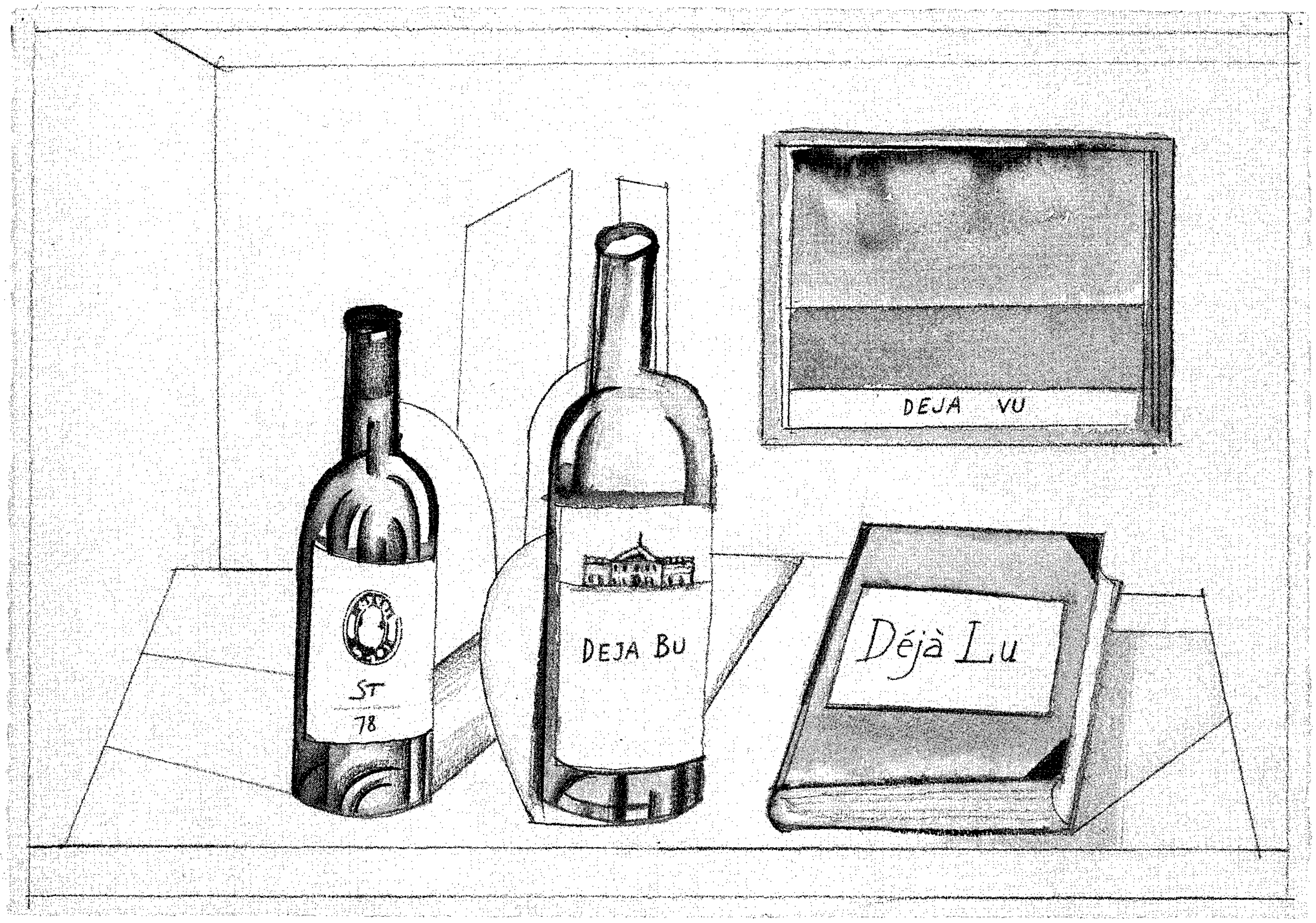
# LA VIE EN ROSE

*A trip abroad in the late nineteen-forties.*

BY ROGER ANGELL

A Saturday evening in May, 1949, and I am taking a moonlight leak in the garden at Ditchley. Hedges and statuary cast elegant shadows nearby, but I've had a bit of wine and it probably doesn't occur to me that this is one of the better alfresco loos I have visited—the Italianate garden installed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe in 1935, as a culminating grace note to the celebrated Georgian pile of Ditchley Park, in Oxfordshire, designed by James Gibbs and built in 1722. Ditchley, with a deer park and a village within its borders, is headed inexorably for the English Heritage Register but for the moment remains the country home of my old friend Marietta FitzGerald and her delightful, fairly recent second husband, Ronald Tree, who is standing a few feet to my left here, in identical posture, his chin in the air as he breathes in traces of boxwood and early primrose. Beyond him, also aiming, is Major Metcalfe, a neighbor of Ronnie's and another dinner guest of his on this evening. He is the same Major Metcalfe who proved such a staunch friend to the Prince of Wales at Fort Belvedere during the difficult abdication days, in 1936, and who stood up as best man the following year, when the Prince, reborn as the Duke of Windsor, married Wallis Warfield Simpson in Monts, France. Major Edward Dudley Metcalfe, M.V.O., M.C., I mean, who at any moment, surely, will invite me to call him Fruity, the way everybody else does. He and I are in black tie, and the moonlight lies magically on his satin lapels, just as it does on mine. Ronnie is wearing a beige velvet smoking, perfectly O.K. for a country host, I guess, but he looks less dashing or narrow, less right, than Fruity and I do. Good old Fruity. Soon we three will amble back up the terrace steps, toward the tall lighted doors and the sounds of conversation and rattled dice within. My wife, Evelyn, ravishing in her silk top and shimmery gray skirt, will look up from the backgammon table, where she has taken on Ronnie's first son, Michael (he's in his late twenties), and has just realized that she's in over her head. "How much is eleven pounds?" she whispers urgently. It's around forty-five dollars, I figure quickly—big bucks, to us—but of course none of this is for keeps. Only it is, we find.

Memory stops here. Nothing more can be made of that ancient weekend. Evelyn and I were impostors—not members of the bon ton but a visiting, unembarrassed American couple, still in their twenties, on a lucky six-week dive into England and France, mostly paid for by the magazine *Holiday*, where I was an editor and writer. I was scouting the Continent for writers and picture ideas, or some such scam. We had married in 1942, were separated by the war, and when it was over swiftly acquired New York jobs and friends, an apartment in the upper reaches of Riverside Drive, a two-tone Ford Tudor, a bulldog, and, sixteen months before this, a baby daughter, now in the hands of an affectionate grandmother. The works. But, given this chance, we grabbed it, booked passage on the slowpoke liner De Grasse—the only French Line vessel as yet restored to the Atlantic run after the war—and after six entrancing days and nights debarked and did the tourist thing. Westminster Abbey, the bombed-out City, St. Paul's. Green Park in the spring sunshine. The British Museum. Oxford and the Trees. Paris. The Orangerie and the Cimetière Père-Lachaise. Our rented Citroën Onze—with its chevron-striped grille, crooked-arm gearshift, low power, and sneaky reverse gear—would carry us faithfully along the uncrowded two-lane routes to the south. What was the French word we needed for "windshield wiper," after ours gave out during a thunderstorm outside Le Puy? Why, *essuie-glace*, of course. Who could forget that?



SAUL STEINBERG, UNTITLED (1978) ©THE SAUL STEINBERG FOUNDATION

There was a funeral going on at the cathedral in Chartres when we arrived, the soaring gray columns enfolded in black at their base. The next noon, on Ascension Day, we walked into Bourges Cathedral to blazing candlelight and mauve sunlit shafts above, just in time for a raft of first Communions. "Be joyful, *mes enfants*," said the white-hatted bishop to the three-deep rows of pink-cheeked, well-combed nine-year-olds. "You are being accepted into the one true Church, here in the most beautiful structure in the world." Why, yes—where do we go to sign up?

We were lucky, but this was long ago and one wants more than a pee on the grass or the *tong* of a funeral bell, behind the altar at Chartres, to bring it clear. But only anecdote continues to work. Late at night aboard the De Grasse, Evelyn is dancing with our friend Tom Hollyman, a *Holiday* photographer, and Jean Hollyman with a young purser. At our tiny table, with its crowded champagne glasses and triangular white C.G.T. ashtrays, I am in deep converse with a fellow-passenger, Alfonso Bedoya, the Mexican movie actor who was such a hit last year as the bandito chief in "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre." (Encounters like this happened all the time on the Atlantic run just then. The dearth of shipping—the De Grasse herself had recently been raised from the bottom of the Gironde estuary, where the Germans scuttled her—made for a travellers' bottleneck, where celebrities and the rest of us squashed cheerfully together for a few days at a time.) Here, sometimes in French, sometimes in Spanish, Bedoya is discussing monetary or agricultural issues—I'm not always sure which, though I nod in agreement—in emerging Latin America. Part of me is listening to him and another part following the ship's five-piece dance band as it shifts shamelessly from "La Seine" to "J'Attendrai," but in truth I am only waiting for my new friend to flash his enormous teeth and cry, "Badges, badges—I don't have to show you any steenking badges!"

In London, I know, we caught Laurence Olivier as Chorus and Vivien Leigh as an anguished Antigone at the New Theatre, but not a word or gesture of it comes back now. Instead, I see us sitting down to dinner at the Café Brevaux, in Paris, with *The New Yorker's* Janet Flanner, where another guest of hers, Tennessee Williams, seizes Evelyn's hand and presses it to his forehead. "What do you think?" he asks, and Evelyn, shaking her head sadly, supplies the right answer. "I think you're really getting sick," she says. Looking for a second opinion, he produces a thermometer from an inner pocket, shakes it down, and takes his temperature behind a menu. "Go home, Tenn," says Flanner, in her field marshal's contralto, but he stays on and does away with a white-asparagus salad, his veal Marengo and *fonds d'artichauts à la crème*, and, a brave though gravely ill playwright, remains as well for a *mousseline au chocolat* and the cheese platter and coffee and a tiny Armagnac and then, why not, one more.

Southward in our Citroën, we came out of the mountains at Alès and on from there to Les Baux (no one else turns up for lunch at the fabled Baumanière) and Arles and Nîmes (there's a bloodless Provençal bullfight in the blazing-hot Roman amphitheatre) and Tarascon, and, with the sea now shining off to our

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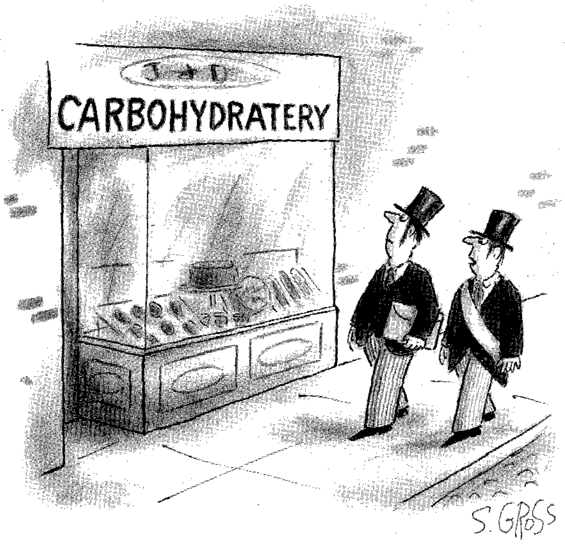
right, Saint-Tropez and Antibes. Arrived at our destination, we're at breakfast on the terrace of the modest Hotel Metropole, in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, when we are startled by the unmistakable sounds of a Boeing 377 starting its four propellers—*WHEE-EEE-eee-ouzzzze*—and warming for takeoff—*RhhhOUUMMMM!*—from a room on the second floor. It is the S. J. Perelman family—Sid and Laura and twelve-year-old Abby and ten-year-old Adam—or, more accurately, the pair of caged mynah birds they brought along from Singapore to this wildly accidental meeting, here by the lapping Mediterranean. The Perelmans had been in the Far East for three months and, with many stops along the way (giving the mynahs a chance to tune up their act), were by degrees heading home.

Perelman, already a Mt. Rushmore eminence on the landscape of American humor, was more a friend of my mother and stepfather's than mine, but, anxious for company as tourists are, we two families palled up: ate and drank and swam and talked together and, jamming all six of us into the Citroën, drove up the corniches and then back down from Menton, mousing around (as Sid put it) among the white villages, with their withered trees, dusty pétanque courts, and alley-like streets, half empty in this off-season. Mornings, Abby serenaded our breakfasts from above, practicing on her well-travelled cello. Sid, natty and with his gagman's jaw always fractionally agape, followed every conversation with terrifying attention. He and the tall, dark-eyed Laura liked it here and arranged to rent a villa in Èze for an extra week or two. When we looked the place over one morning, the kids went rocketing off down a steep path to the shore, while Perelman conferred with the owner and a rental agent. There was a discussion of some sort between the two locals, and Sid, his eyeglasses glittering, offered free translation: "*Hélas*, these hectares themselves find encumbered."

That afternoon, we went to Monte Carlo in two cars, and, while Laura took Abby and Adam off somewhere, ventured into the Société Anonyme des Bains de Mer et du Cercle des Étrangers de Monaco for a spot of gaming. The long rooms were not stuffed with slot machines and customers in shorts, as they are said to be now, but did not exactly come up to expectation. A bare two tables were in business in the curtained, fusty Public Gaming Rooms, with others shrouded in tattered baize. The handful of players, bending over their skimpy stacks of thirty-franc chips, appeared to include some local widows, making a late-afternoon stop-off before the evening rates and lighting came on. But the quiet commands from the formally garbed croupiers were straight out of E. Phillips Oppenheim, and the suave Sid now faltered a moment before a vacant seat. "Do you know how to do this?" he whispered. "Sure," I said and slipped in. I lost two early bets on Rouge and another on Passe, got eleven chips back for my one on a Transversale Pleine, and, encouraged, plunked down four on No. 26—the traditional spot for an opening thirty-seven-to-one long shot. Around went the little ball, to the croupier's "*Mesdames, messieurs, faites vos jeux. Les jeux sont faits—rien ne va plus!*," then slowed and bounced—rickety-tackety tipitty-tup—and nestled sweetly into my slot. There was a gasp—it came from me—and piles of oblong chips, triangular chips, and variously tinted round chips slid smoothly to my part of the green. "Jesus, what did you do!" Perelman cried, but I was no longer of his party. Seizing a casual stack of counters from the top of the pile, I tossed it toward the man at the middle of the table—I really did this—who raked it into a slot next to the wheel. "*Merci, monsieur*," came the murmured response (with little bows) from the band of croupiers. "*La maison vous remercie*." I smiled, extracted a Sobranie from my silver case, and accepted a light from the white-gloved countess at my shoulder.

I had won perhaps fifty dollars and, staying on, added a lucky ten or fifteen more before we arose. Perelman, betting his kids' birthdays, then his hotel-room number subtracted by the number of letters in his name, worked like a trooper and wound up seven or eight bucks to the good. "Never again, Etienne," he said as we walked out into the late sunlight. "You must swear to stop me." Not till the next day did I give him a break and confess that my expertise and gambling manners had all come out of the Encyclopædia Britannica, consulted back home before my departure, which had a terrific "Roulette" entry in



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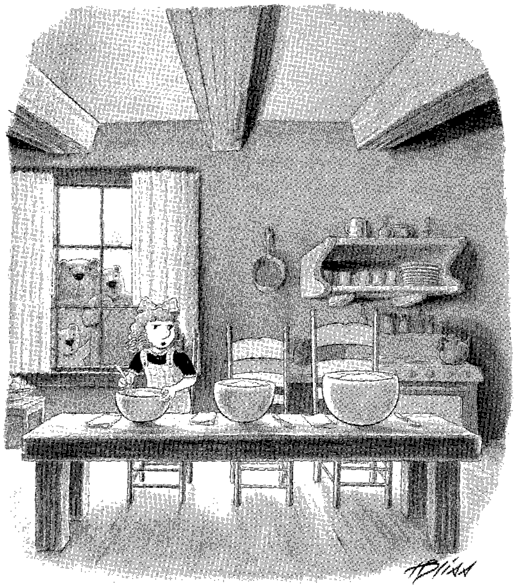
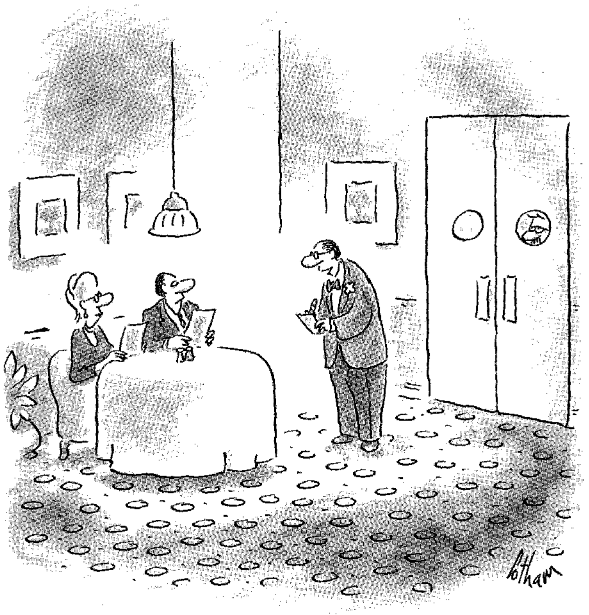
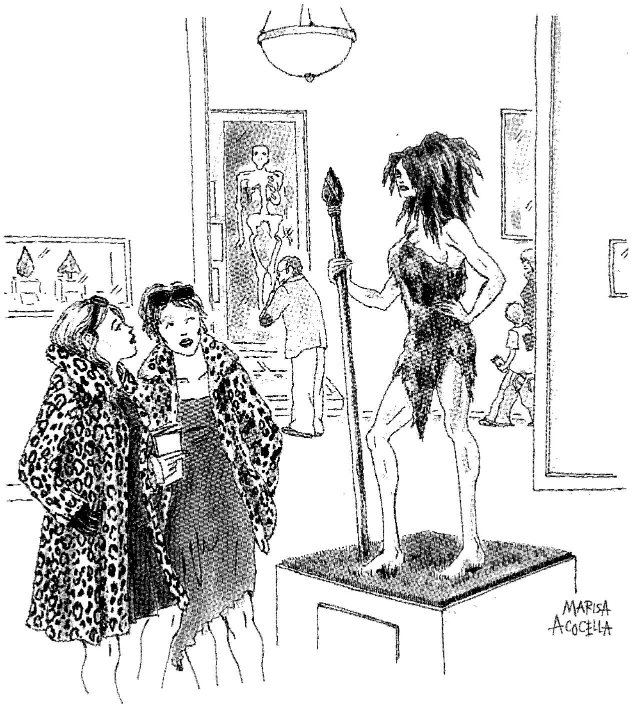


" THESE ARE ALL TOO CARB FILLED."



"I'LL GO AHEAD AND HAVE THE PASTRY CHEF STAND DOWN."



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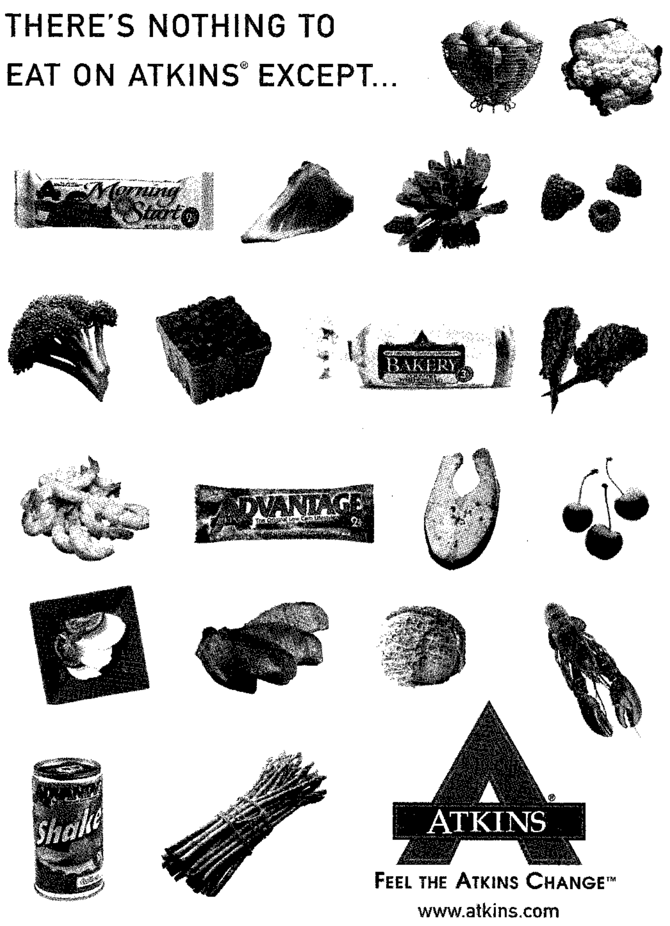
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the "RAY–SAR" volume. I took notes.

Our last stop—Evelyn and I had to start back—came the next afternoon, when we pressed a call on W. Somerset Maugham at his Villa Mauresque, next door on Cap Ferrat. Perelman, a fabled reader, told me he had once written the grand old man of British letters to express admiration for his effortless style, and won a similar mash note in return. Now they had a date. In the Perelman wheels this time, I think, we noticed Maugham's adopted Moorish symbol—for good fortune, I think—here worked into an iron arch at his entranceway. The same sign appeared on the covers of "Of Human Bondage" and "The Moon and Sixpence" and "Cakes and Ale" and the rest, which the world had snapped up in staggering numbers over the previous decades. A flood of best-sellers and long-running West End plays had earned him this comely retreat, in a part of the world that even then looked lightly on his private life. Here, twisting and turning around corners, up hill and down dale, we followed the raked driveway onward through stunning groves of palm and pine and splashy bougainvillea. "The royalties! The royalties!" cried Sid in pure admiration and purer envy, as we drew up at last at the flowering stone steps and spreading red-tiled roofs of the shrine.

Maugham appeared, a frail gent of seventy-five, slightly bent in his soft shirt, pleated summery trousers, and suède pumps. With his skimpy, slicked-back hair and heavily lidded eyes, he suggested a Galápagos tortoise, wise and of immense age. He shook hands with us each, repeating our names, and told Abby and Adam to make themselves at home. Indoors, tea was produced and Maugham's cheerful partner, Alan Searle, introduced. Two house guests, the tall poet C. Day-Lewis and a slim, long-necked woman in gray, floated in and silently took places in the vast low living room. All went well except the conversation, which soon became a trickle, unhelped by Maugham's famous and extraordinarily demanding stammer and my sudden realization that the woman next to me, Day-Lewis's companion, was the novelist Rosamond Lehmann, whose "Dusty Answer" and "The Weather in the Streets" I had sighed over while in college. Silences fell, broken by thumpings and running feet above, from Abby and Adam. "They're in my st-study, I believe," Maugham said, smiling, as Sid bolted from the room. Dadly noises arose from the stairs. We picked up a bit after a round of Maugham Specials, a grenadine concoction prepared by Searle. Sipping mine, I saw Evelyn gesture with her eyes toward the window over Maugham's shoulder, and, shifting my gaze, caught sight of a paper airplane as it sailed slowly down from above and impaled itself in a jacaranda.

Ever the host, Maugham pulled over his footstool and sat down again, one leg tucked beneath him. "Tell me, Mister Angell," he said, "have you ever worn a s-s-sarong?" I had to ask him to repeat the word and then said no, not yet. "Oh, but you m-must!" he cried, wrinkling his wrinkles with kindness. "V-very *cool*—but they do f-f-fall off!"

On the way back, Perelman lit into his progeny. "This was a big, big disappointment," he said. "I don't see how we can take you anywhere." Silence. "Listen," he resumed in a different voice, "what was it like up there?"

These tales and name-droppings grow dim with repeating, and hearing them once again, in the fashion with which we stare into the too small black-and-white snapshots in a family album, we look into their corners and distant porches or mysterious windows in search of something more—times of day, a day of the week, other names and other tones of voice, beyond recall. What in the world did Evelyn and I talk about—beyond our adored but absent baby, I mean—all those weeks and miles? How did we survive the shrivelling boredom of long days on the road, through landscapes relentlessly renewed and snatched away but never entered. Conversation saved us, but I can't bring back a word now. What books were we reading, which crisis were the French and British papers and the Paris *Tribune* full of each day? What fears or sadness woke us up at night, either or both of us, and made it hard to sleep again? With effort, if I wait not too eagerly, I can sometimes bring back her voice. She was happy on this trip, and could prove it. She had been a diabetic since the age of six, but here in France, while eating two exceptional meals every day, all over the map, and

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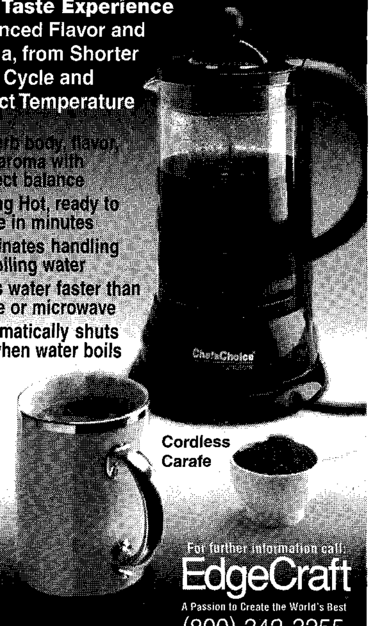

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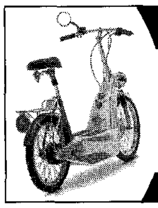

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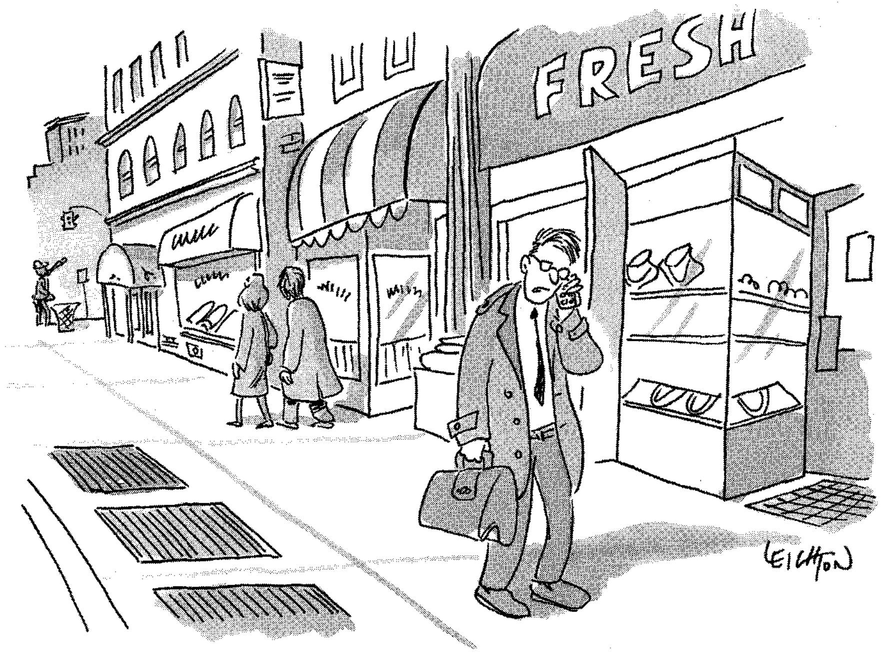
drinking down the splendid wines, she was able to cut down her daily insulin—a stab in the thigh, mornings and evenings—to her lowest levels in a lifetime. We divorced in the sixties and she died—can it be?—almost seven years ago.

On the De Grasse again, homeward bound, we were old hands. We told our new friends the Sidney Simons—he was a painter and sculptor coming back from a spell in France—which deck chairs were out of the wind and which dinner service to sign up for (the *deuxième*, except on cabaret nights, so you could leave earlier and grab a better table by the floor). In our cabin, Evelyn told me that she had wept a bit in the taxi on the way to our train to Cherbourg, but couldn't tell if it was from leaving Paris or missing Callie. I said we could do this again, maybe next year, and make it a shorter trip. We never did. Life and work and a second daughter intervened, and there was the money problem and the kids' summers to think about, and almost before we knew it the De Grasse and every other Atlantic passenger vessel were gone, swept clean away by the airliners' seven hours to Orly, and by Eurail Pass and Junior Year Abroad, and by the hundreds of thousands of kids and travellers and shifting populations, from all over the world, who filled the fabled capitals and charming roads and did away with our postwar afternoon, leaving only these moments.

On the De Grasse the night of the Captain's Gala, a day and a half before New York, Evelyn and I are in close embrace, dancing to the Jerome Kern chestnut "You're Devastating." Our dancing has picked up, and we know how to let the slow lift of the floor tip us together, and to wait for the sensual tilt and counterflow of the departing wave. The bandleader, Tony Prothes, gives us a little nod as we swing by. He remembers us from the trip over, I've decided, but of course he's good at this. Like our cabin steward and the second sommelier and the barman Charles—Jules? Gérard?—he goes back to the Normandie, before the war. Half an hour later—or is this on another crossing, years later?—I am sitting at a cabaret table next to Mme. Hervé Alphand, the wife of the French Ambassador, whom I met at a cocktail party earlier in the evening. Tall and olive-skinned—I think she is Greek by origin—she will become one of the great Washington hostesses. She is wearing an amazing evening gown, and when I say something about it she suddenly spreads the skirt's thick folds so they cover my knees and those of the man on her opposite side. The three of us are under the multicolored skirt, which lies in glistening heaps, holding us together. "Mainbocher," she says, smiling. "It's *élégante*, don't you think? It brings pleasure." ♦



*"Can you hang on a sec? I think I just took another picture of my ear."*

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ANNALS OF POLITICS

# A DEMOCRATIC WORLD

*Can liberals take foreign policy back from the Republicans?*

BY GEORGE PACKER

In December, 2001, after the fall of the Taliban, President Bush asked Senator Joseph Biden, a Delaware Democrat who was then the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, to draft a legislative proposal for winning the minds of young people around the Muslim world. The following month, Biden went to Kabul, where he toured a new school—one that was bitterly cold, with plastic sheeting over the windows and a naked bulb hanging from the ceiling. When the visit was over and Biden started to leave, a young girl stood ramrod straight at her desk and said, "You cannot leave. You cannot leave."

"I promise I'll come back," Biden told her.

"You cannot leave," the girl insisted. "They will not deny me learning to read. I will read, and I will be a doctor like my mother. I will. America must stay."

As Biden put it in a recent interview, the Afghan girl was telling him, "Don't fuck with me, Jack. You got me in here. You said you were going to help me. You better not leave me now."

Biden described the encounter as "a catalytic event for me." Its lesson was one that he had already begun to absorb in the Balkans, where he had travelled extensively during the nineteen-nineties. There is a worldwide struggle, he explained, between the values of liberal democracy and the destructive ideologies that fester with dictatorship, misery, and humiliation; in this struggle, America needs to expand the conditions for democracy in the most concrete ways, with serious commitments of energy and resources, or risk greater instability. After September 11th, this insight became a matter of urgent national security. When Biden returned from Kabul, he followed up on the President's request and wrote a proposal to build, staff, and supply a thousand schools in Afghanistan, at a cost of twenty thousand dollars each. By thinking small, Biden believed, he had a better chance of success: "You could shove twenty million dollars anywhere in a two-trillion budget, and this was something specific."

PAT OLIPHANT

The schools would employ teachers, many of them women, who had been jobless and desperate under the Taliban, and they would teach a modern curriculum to children who, if they had any schooling at all, knew only the Islamist education of the madrassa. "It was something concrete we could show the Afghanis we're doing," Biden said. "It was something other than the butt of a gun."

The idea went nowhere. Biden's Democratic colleagues didn't get behind it, and very soon the Administration moved on. The most important front in the worldwide struggle largely dropped from Washington's view, and the Senator stopped receiving invitations to the White House.

By the fall of 2002, the Bush Administration had begun mobilizing for the invasion of Iraq. Biden's view was that Saddam Hussein, who had violated every international agreement he had signed but was not an immediate threat, would have to be confronted sooner or later. But he also worried that a unilateral war with Iraq would distract America from the tasks it had only just begun—stabilizing Afghanistan and defeating Al Qaeda—and seriously damage the alliances necessary to eliminate terrorism and other problems that freely cross borders: weapons proliferation, disease, environmental damage, ethnic conflict, impoverishment. "The burden was on Saddam," Biden said. "But I would not have prematurely forced the world's hand on whether or not to go to war, because I'd get the wrong answer."

Instead, he tried to slow the Administration's momentum without shifting the burden from Saddam. It was in his party's power to do so—Democrats still held the majority in the Senate (though they were about to lose it, in part because the public didn't trust them on the issue of national security). Together with Senator Richard Lugar, of Indiana, the committee's ranking Republican, Biden drafted an alternative to the Administration's Iraq resolution that would have placed various restraints on the President, making it harder for him to wage war unilaterally and forcing him to bolster his case that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. Lugar had assembled a surprisingly large number of Republicans—twenty-five or so out of the forty-nine—who were uneasy with the Administration's bellicose stance. In order to deliver their votes, Lugar needed Biden to line up at least forty Democrats;

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and Biden was sure of only thirty-eight.

As Biden recalled, on September 30th Lugar, who was in touch with the White House, called him. "Joe, I fear in the next twenty-four, forty-eight hours, the President's going to cut a deal with Gephardt," he said.

Biden was stunned. "Gephardt? Gephardt's not going to do this."

"Joe, I'm telling you. They're working two sides here. They're working us, keeping us occupied, but they're working just as hard meeting with him. Whoever they reach an agreement with first, they're going to go with."

If Richard Gephardt, the House Democratic minority leader, came out for the Administration's resolution, it would be politically almost impossible for any Republican to support the Biden-Lugar alternative. Biden had to gather the Democratic holdouts immediately and persuade them to stand behind his resolution so that he and Lugar could move it onto the Senate floor the next day.

That evening, Biden met with half a dozen leading Democrats who were opposed to any war resolution at all. "They said, 'It's not right, you're not principled, asking us to do this,' " Biden recalled. "I said, 'Wait, wait, wait. Please spare me the lecture. I thought our job was to do as much as we could to prevent this President from going off to war half-cocked. Does anybody in here believe that we're going to get any resolution remotely approaching the constraints this resolution has?' " Biden warned his colleagues, "Guess what? Your principle is going to kill a lot of Americans." But the antiwar Democrats were intractable. At the end of the meeting, Senator Paul Wellstone, of Minnesota, and Senator Barbara Boxer, of California, left the room arm in arm, chuckling.

Two days later, with no alternative making its way through the Senate, Gephardt appeared at Bush's side in the Rose Garden and announced his support for the Administration's war resolution. Nine days later, both houses of Congress approved it, and the President had all the authority he needed to invade Iraq.

Biden told me these stories in answer to a simple question: Why hasn't the Democratic Party played a serious role in shaping the national debate about foreign policy since September 11th? Biden has been one of the few Democrats to try. His views defy Party orthodoxy. He has criticized the Administration relentlessly, not for doing too much in the war on terrorism but for doing too little, and in the wrong way—for failing to understand that this war has to be waged on many fronts, the most important of which is ideological. The fate of the schoolgirl in Kabul is as critical to ultimate victory as the next generation of unmanned aircraft.

Biden's own party has all but forfeited the chance to make this case. The two complementary tendencies that doomed his effort on Iraq have characterized Democrats since the war on terrorism began: on one side, the urge to take cover under Republican policies in order not to

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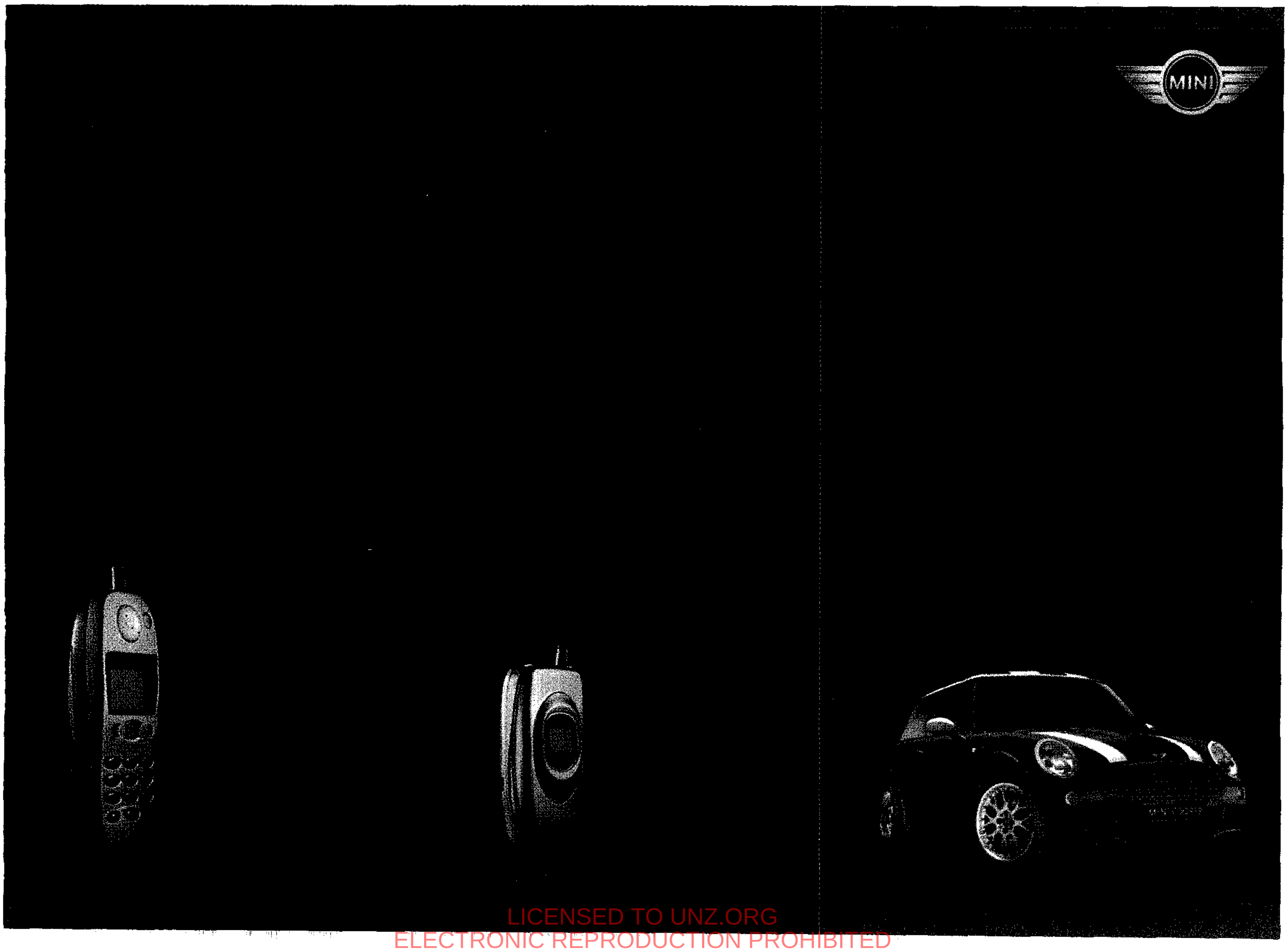
be labelled weak; on the other, a rigid opposition that invokes moral principle but often leads to the very results it seeks to prevent. Neither posture shows a willingness to grapple with the world as it is, to do the hard work of imagining a foreign policy for the post-September-11th era.

The Democratic Party hasn't always been stymied by foreign policy. A half century ago, the Party's ideas were ascendant, transforming America's international role in the postwar years as dramatically as President Bush has since September 11th. In 1945, the United States had more relative power and prestige than it has today. Instead of seizing the occasion to strip the country of constraints and dominate the world, the ruling Democrats, most of whom were New Dealers, realized that the global fight against Communism required partners. The postwar Democratic leadership under President Truman helped bring into being institutions and alliances—the United Nations, NATO, the World Bank—through which the country's goals could be met. These goals were as much economic and political as military. The thinking behind Truman's speech in March, 1947, asking Congress for economic as well as military aid to Greece and Turkey against Communist insurgents, and the speech by his Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, a few months later, calling for a massive reconstruction package for a devastated Europe was the same: containing and ultimately defeating totalitarianism required an investment in countries where conditions made Communism a threat. It also required the participation of Americans at every level of society. Anti-Communist liberals in the labor movement and the Democratic Party funded social-democratic parties in Western Europe as alternatives to Communism; politicians and intellectuals organized themselves in associations like Americans for Democratic Action and around magazines like *Encounter* to fight the war of ideas. These liberals understood that the new war could not afford to be rigidly doctrinaire; it required a practical effort to understand realities in Europe and elsewhere, in order to know what would be necessary to prevent Communism from winning over individuals and countries. It had to be wise as well as tough. Above all, it needed the help of other democracies—there had to be alliances, reciprocity. This is what was meant by liberal internationalism.

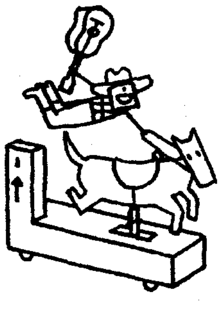
Vietnam, of course, badly divided Democrats, turning some into Republicans and others into pacifists. And here is a remarkable fact: since the nineteen-sixties, the Democratic Party has had no foreign policy. Its leaders have continued to speak the language of liberal internationalism, but after Vietnam most Democrats haven't wanted to back up the talk with power. They continued to put their faith in institutions like the United Nations (where Saddam's Iraq was a member in good standing and Libya chaired the human-rights commission) long after it was apparent that these institutions



needed repair. By the nineteen-nineties, liberal internationalism had become an atrophied muscle, with little fibre or sinew left. The Clinton Administration allowed a genocidal war to bleed away in the Balkans for two and a half years before acting to end it. In the dot-com decade, a lot of Democrats simply lost interest in the rest of the world. Clinton's foreign policy was globalization: encouraging the economic interconnectedness of the world, without developing a mechanism to prevent threats and conflicts from becoming catastrophes without borders.

The exception was Kosovo. NATO's intervention in the Balkans, in the spring of 1999, was one of the successes of the Clinton years, stopping the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians, preventing the Balkan wars from spreading into Macedonia and Albania, and ultimately making possible Slobodan Milosevic's removal from power and his current trial at The Hague. However flawed aspects of the military strategy were—three months of aerial bombing with no contingency for ground troops—the Kosovo war was a singular example of American power creating international coöperation on behalf of stability and human rights.

But Kosovo never became the Clinton Doctrine. Clinton himself seemed ambivalent about the war, and obstacles thrown up by a Republican Congress kept NATO's first war from becoming the foundation of post-Cold War American foreign policy.



The humanitarian interventions of the nineties—Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo—and the glaring failure in Rwanda made a minority of Democrats willing, sometimes even eager, advocates of the use of American power for liberal ends abroad. But the Party's base remains instinctively uncomfortable with activism and armed force. In Biden's words, most Democrats still "worship at the shrine of multilateral institutions, and without absolute consensus there's no action."

While the Democrats held the White House, the ideological children of Ronald Reagan were thinking hard about America's place in the world after the Cold War. At conferences and in journal articles, the singular idea of these conservatives was that, with no Soviet threat, the United States was uniquely positioned to exert power all over the world—to discourage rivals, to pursue interests, to spread values, with or without partners. Coalitions might be temporary; force might be used unilaterally and preventively, not just as a matter of convenience but as a point of doctrine. Their view admitted no daylight between American interests and democratic ideals: our motives are good, therefore our unleashed power will have good effects. These thinkers were also skilled publicists, and they defined the difference between the two parties as the difference between strength and weakness.

Within hours of the September 11th attacks, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, were suggesting that Iraq—the unflagging obsession of the conservatives throughout the nineties—should receive the brunt of American wrath. Whether or not this was a sound analysis of the threat, the conservatives were organized; they had ideas, and they were poised to put them into action. The Iraq war was nothing if not a war of ideas—an elective war that came of arguments and theories about America and the world. It was exactly on this level that Democrats were ill-prepared to join the contest.

But from the start, and at its core, the Administration's idea of the war on terrorism has been flawed. This flaw, which is often discussed as a matter of tone, is so substantive that the Administration constantly undermines even its own best efforts.

President Bush has given a number of speeches in support of global democracy, and they have been some of his finest. Nine days after the attacks in New York and Washington, he went before Congress and described the war on terrorism as a continuation of the twentieth-century conflict between freedom and totalitarianism. More recently, in the wake of the Iraq war, he has championed the spread of democracy through the world's meanest precincts. "Iraqi democracy will succeed," the President said in November, "and that success will send forth the news from Damascus to Tehran that freedom can be the future of every nation."

The soaring language recalls that of Bush's hero Ronald Reagan. It gives the new conservative foreign policy its poetry. The first President Bush never made such proclamations about Iraq, or about any other benighted country, for he belonged to the Nixon-Kissinger wing of the Republican Party—"realists" who believe in a balance of power and distrust idealistic talk of "global democratic revolution." But there is a problem with the language of Bush the son: his actions rarely measure up to his rhetoric. A case in point was the President's November speech at the National Endowment for Democracy's twentieth-anniversary celebrations. After the fall of Baghdad, an institute funded by the endowment sent a team to Iraq to organize a series of focus groups so that Iraqis could talk about their collective future. The institute wanted to follow up with workshops that would train Iraqis in forming moderate civic groups and political parties, but its money soon ran out. Despite repeated requests, the funding wasn't replenished until last month.

It happens often enough to form a pattern: the President talks of a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan at the Virginia Military Institute in April, 2002, and then he fails to include any dollars for Afghanistan in his 2004 budget proposal; the President gives a landmark speech at the American Enterprise Institute in February, 2003, proposing a democratic Iraq as a model for the transformation of the entire Middle East, and within two months the Pentagon's minimalist planning for postwar Iraq has that country in chaos, its state institutions gutted, its people demoralized; the State Department sets out to improve public diplomacy in the Islamic world, then puts the campaign in the hands of Charlotte Beers, a Madison Avenue executive, who produces a slick video about Muslims in the United States that is widely ridiculed; the Administration vows to get tough on Saudi sources that finance terrorism and the spread of extremist ideology, then suppresses the section of a congressional report on September 11th having to do with Saudi Arabia; after the Iraq war the President vows to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian

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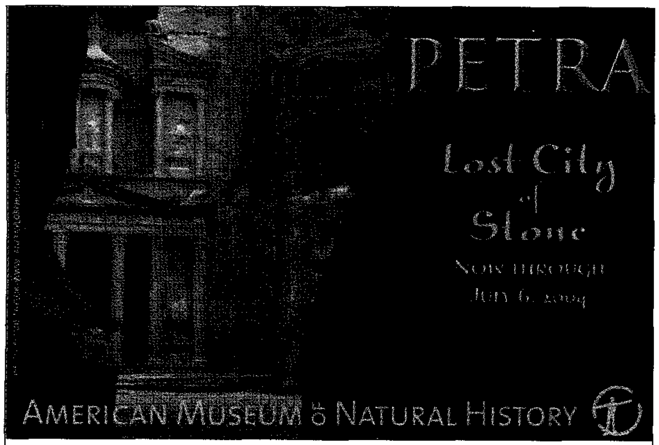

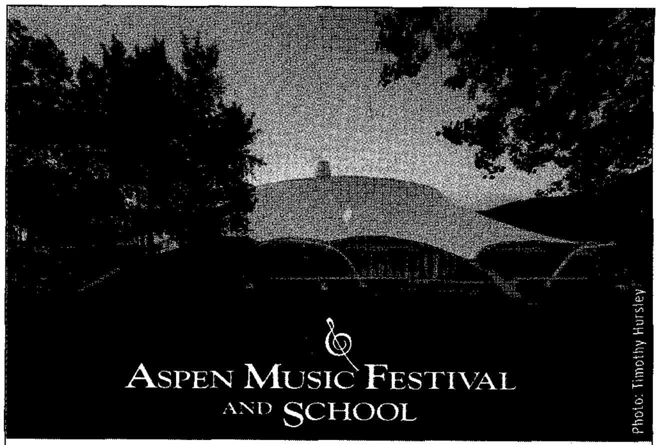

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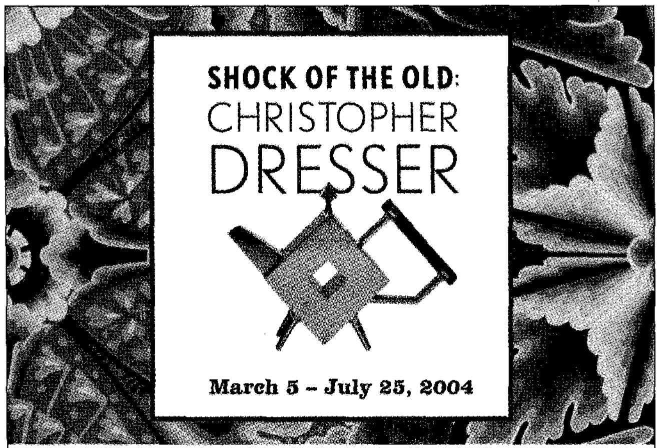
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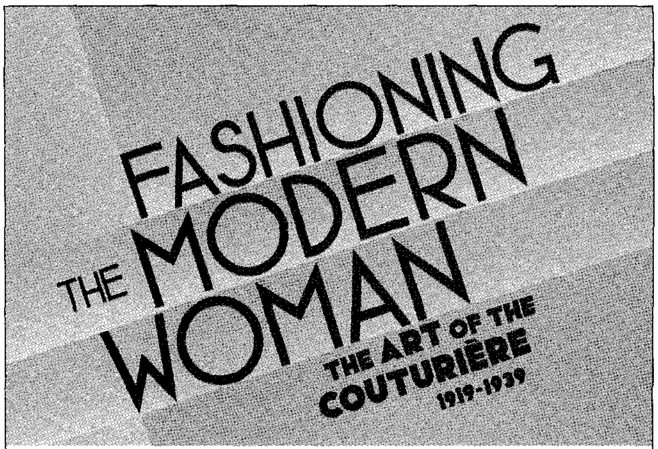
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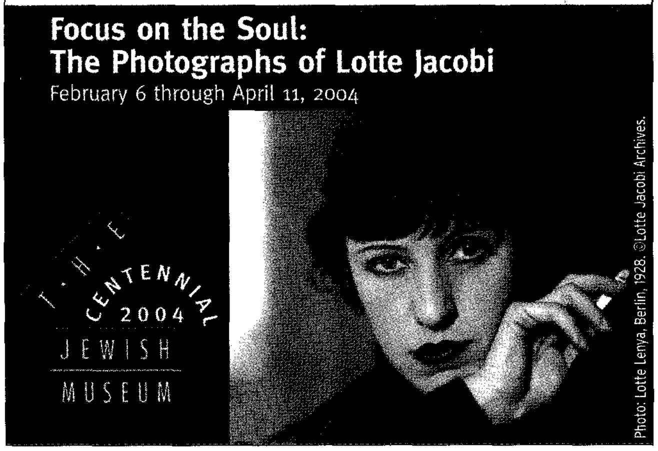
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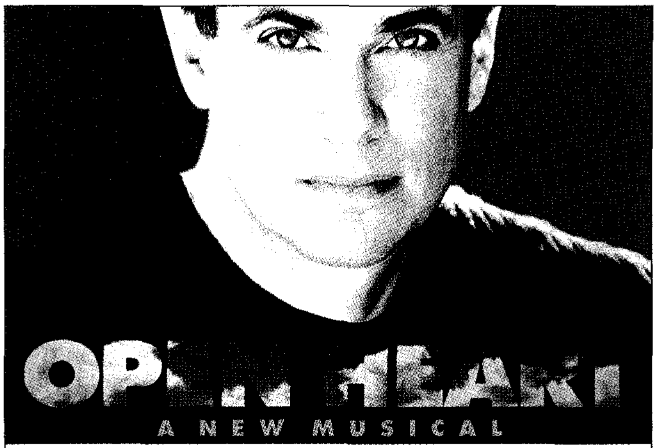

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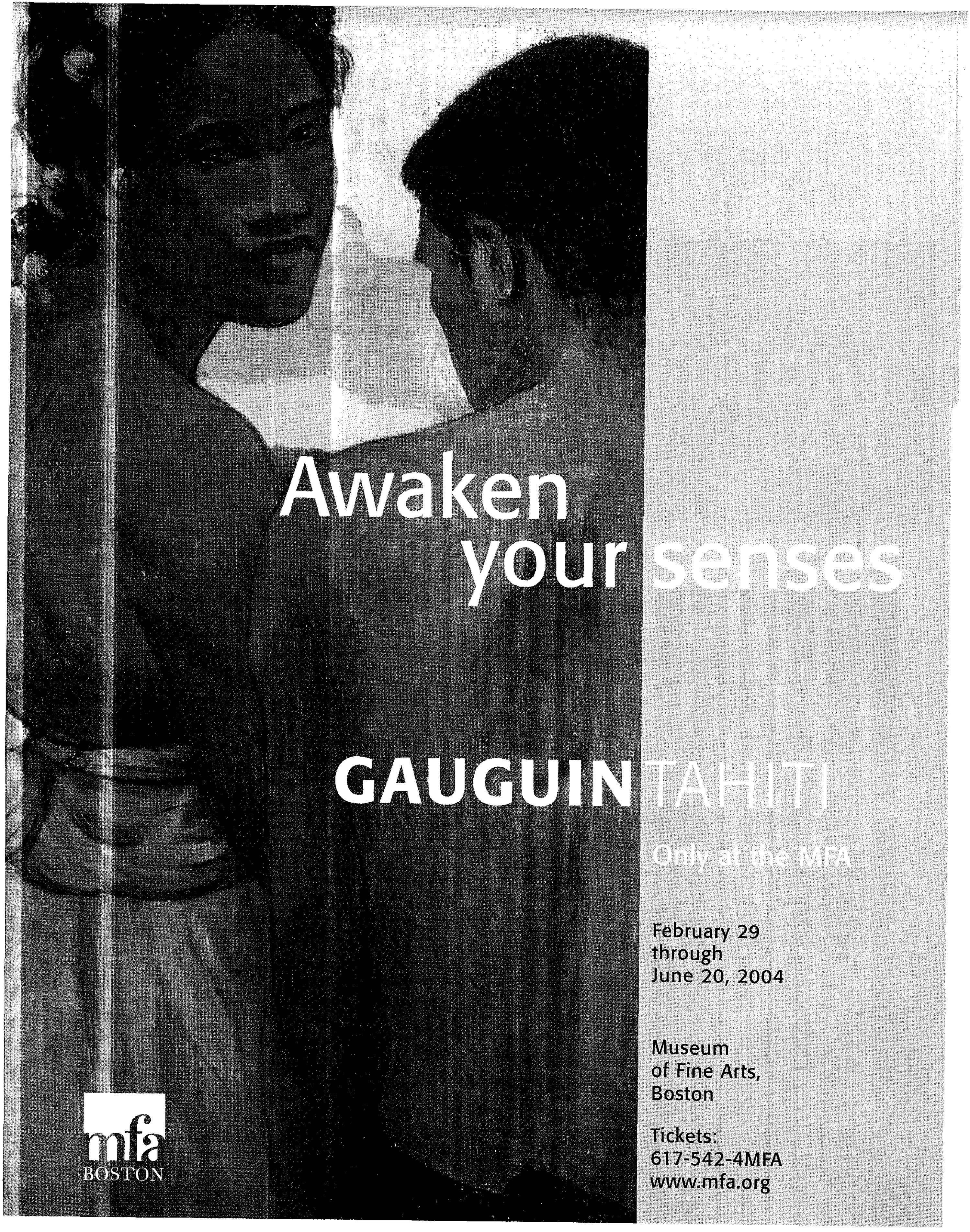
Alec BALDWIN Anne HECHE

TWENTIETH CENTURY



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conflict, only to stand aside a few months later.

In Iraq, at least, the Administration, having accepted that its initial democracy efforts were wholly inadequate, has begun to make serious commitments. In a frantic rush to educate voters and strengthen institutions before its June 30th deadline for the transfer of sovereignty, it is about to flood the country's civic desert with almost half a billion dollars, including twelve and a half million for building political parties.

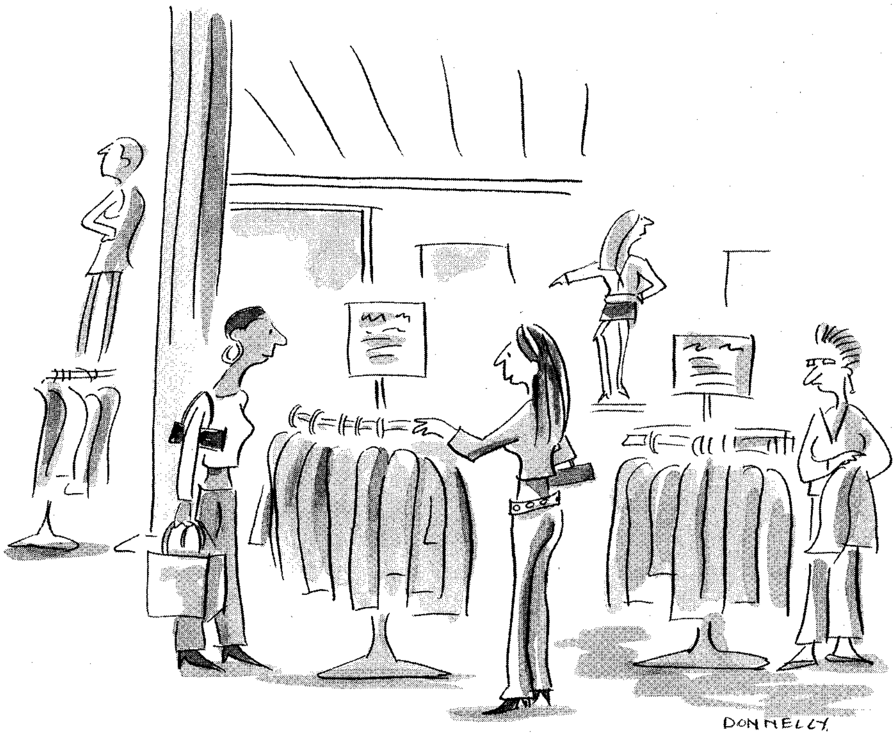
Elsewhere, the Administration remains averse to such commitments. The President and his chief advisers have long expressed disdain for the "soft" uses of American power. In the 2000 campaign, Bush ran against the nation-building efforts of the Clinton Administration. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 2000, Condoleezza Rice called for an end to such missions, asserting that the United States Army "is not a civilian police force." "Peacekeeping" is a dirty word at the Rumsfeld Pentagon: its peacekeeping division was renamed the Office of Stability Operations, and its importance was downgraded, even after war created the need for such an operation in Afghanistan and then again, on an even larger scale, in Iraq. In Afghanistan, the peacekeepers never ventured beyond Kabul and Kunduz, and the country's admirable new constitution is jeopardized by warlords and the resurgent Taliban.

The Bush Administration has always been more interested in military power than in any of the other tools that are available to advance its goals. The hostility to nation-building, the attitude that treaties and international institutions are disposable nuisances, the treatment of alliances as matters of convenience—all these reflect a belief that the country will be safer, and the world ultimately better off, if America is free to use its awesome strength.

The President speaks idealistically of spreading democracy around the world. "The advance of freedom is the calling of our time," he said in November. "It is the calling of our country." Since Bush took office, favorable views of America have plunged globally—especially in the Muslim world. The Pew Research Center found that in Turkey, our secular Muslim NATO ally, favorable opinion of the United States fell from fifty-two per cent three years ago to fifteen per cent last spring. For an Administration rhetorically devoted to the calling of freedom, this trend ought to cause great concern. But Bush expresses only bewilderment, and his hard-line advisers scoff that we can't make decisions about American security based on opinion polls in foreign countries. Since September 11th, the President and his spokesmen have regarded the crisis as a test of personal will. Do you pass or not? So they've waged the war by self-assertion, guided by the assumption that American might always equates with freedom. But when promoting democracy seems in practice to mean bullying other people into doing what you want, the poetry is lost on the world, and not even the overthrow of tyrants is taken as proof of America's sincerity.

In treating the war on terrorism as a mere military struggle, the Administration's mistake begins with the name itself. "Terrorism" is a method; the terror used by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka is not the enemy in this war. The enemy is an ideology—in the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's phrase, "Islamist totalitarianism"—that reaches from Karachi to London, from Riyadh to Brooklyn, and that uses terror to advance its ends. The Administration's failure to grasp the political nature of the war has led to many crucial mistakes, most notably the Pentagon's attitude that postwar problems in Afghanistan and Iraq would essentially take care of themselves, that we could have democracy on the cheap: once the dictators and terrorists were rooted out, the logic went, freedom would spontaneously grow in their place. As Lakhdar Brahimi, the former United Nations envoy to Afghanistan, recently told the *Times*, "There is now a very well-meaning and welcome Western interest in supporting democracy everywhere, but they want to do it like instant coffee." Instead, in both countries the real struggle has just begun, and it will last a generation or more, with little international help in sight and victory not at all assured.

"They don't get it, because they don't believe this is an ideology," Ivo H. Daalder, a political scientist at the Brookings Institution, said of the Administration. "They believe that this is a state-based threat—that if you get rid of evil people, who are in finite supply, you will have resolved the problem. And the



*"I was happily married once. It wasn't pretty."*

• •

proof of the pudding is a very simple statement that the President keeps repeating: 'It's better to kill them there than to have them kill us here.' Which assumes there are a finite number."

Remarkably, this narrow approach has met with no systematic criticism from the Democratic Party. Democratic leaders attack the Administration for its unilateralism, but, with a few exceptions, they have been unprepared to reckon with the nature and scale of the conflict; and this has to do with the Party's own intellectual shortcomings. Certain mental traits that have spread among Democrats since the Vietnam War get in the way—not just the tendency toward isolationism and pacifism but a cultural relativism (going by the name of "multiculturalism") that makes it difficult for them to mount a wholehearted defense of one political system against another, especially when the other has taken root among poorer and darker-skinned peoples. Like the Bush Administration, the Democrats have failed to grasp the political dimensions of the struggle. They, too, have cast it narrowly, as a matter of security (preferring the notion of police action to that of war). They've pushed the Administration only for greater effort on the margins, such as upgrading communications equipment for firemen and federalizing airport security. And the Iraq war let Democrats off the hook, allowing them to say what they wouldn't do rather than what they would do.

Another approach remains available to the Democrats—one that draws on the Party's own not so distant history. The parallels between the early years of the Cold War and our situation are inexact. The Islamist movement doesn't have the same hold on Westerners that Communism had. It draws on cultures that remain alien to us; the history of colonialism and the fact of religious difference make it all the harder for the liberal democracies of the West to effect change in the Muslim world. Waving the banner of freedom and mustering the will to act aren't enough. Anyone who believes that September 11th thrust us into a Manichaean conflict between good and evil should visit Iraq, where the simplicity of that formula lies half buried under all the crosscurrents of foreign occupation and social chaos and ethnic strife. Simply negotiating the transfer of sovereignty back to Iraqis has proved so vexing that an Administration that jealously guarded the occupation against any international control has turned to the battered and despised United Nations for help in dealing with Iraq's unleashed political forces. Iraq and other battlegrounds require patience, self-criticism, and local knowledge, not just an apocalyptic moral summons.

*"If you hurry, you can make the matinée."*

Nonetheless, for Democrats and for Americans, the first step is to realize that the war on terrorism is actually a war for liberalism—a struggle to bring populations now living under tyrannies and failed states into the orbit of liberal democracy. In this light, it makes sense to think about the strategy and mind-set that the postwar generation brought to their task: the marriage of power and coöperation. Daalder said, "The fundamental challenge—just as the fundamental challenge in '46 and '47 and '48 in France and Italy was to provide Italians and Frenchmen with a real constructive alternative to Communism, to defeat it *politically*—is to provide people in the Islamic world with an alternative that gives them hope in a period where they have only despair." He pointed out that America now spends forty times more on defense than it does on foreign aid, and that half of this aid goes to Israel and Egypt. "This is like the new Cold War, and we've got to fight it as a generational fight in which we need to invest," he said.

As it happens, an increasing number of Democrats are pursuing this theme. Wesley Clark talks about a "new Atlantic Charter" that would make NATO the first resort of American military power, starting in Iraq. "Uncertainties, nations looking for leadership, a multidimensional challenge on a global scale—all of that is similar" to the early Cold War, he told me. "As is the indefinite duration of the challenge." Clark argued that NATO's war in Kosovo, which he conducted as Supreme Allied Commander, could become the basis for a new foreign policy. "You could call it efficient multilateralism—the recognition that if you link diplomacy, law, and force, you can achieve decisive results without using decisive force."

Senator John Kerry, of Massachusetts, has for some time advocated the extension of NATO forces in Kabul to the whole of Afghanistan, and he recently called for expanding public diplomacy in the Muslim world and imposing international sanctions against countries and institutions that fund terrorism, a money flow that the Bush Administration has had little success in shutting off. In a recent debate, Kerry said, "Most importantly, the war on terror is also an engagement in the Middle East economically, socially, culturally, in a way that we haven't embraced, because otherwise we're inviting a clash of civilizations." Senator John Edwards, of North Carolina, proposes publishing an annual list of dissidents imprisoned around the world, and forming an organization of Western democracies and Arab countries moving toward liberalization which would be modelled on efforts to reform the former Eastern Bloc. Invoking Truman and Marshall, Senator Biden talks about a Prevention Doctrine: long-term engagement in troubled regions to head off threats *before* they lead to war—for example, by funding programs to destroy nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union. (The Bush Administration's remarkably sluggish approach to securing "loose nukes" is one consequence of a policy aimed narrowly at terrorists and their state sponsors, like cards in a deck.) All these Democrats advocate a domestic policy that would acknowledge the reality of wartime, including alternative energy, tax fairness, and greater spending on security. But Biden reminded me, "It took the Democratic Party after World War II six years to get that figured out."

If you're paying attention, you can hear the sound of Democratic leaders straining to pry the Party away from its long aversion to America's world leadership. The ghosts of Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy are frequently summoned. These leaders have a thankless job, and, politically, a difficult one. Whatever they thought of the Iraq war, the struggle there is now the epicenter of the war of ideas, and leading Democrats have to show more commitment to the new Iraq's success than they did in opposing the Administration's reconstruction package. A broader approach to the war includes a willingness to fight—and, for Democrats out of power, it's all the harder to persuade a skeptical public that they will fight. But this approach also demands an ability to make judgments about when and where and how to fight—or not. Compared with "axis of evil," "efficient multilateralism" is a pallid phrase. Millions won't rally behind the banner of the Prevention Doctrine. Spending twenty million dollars on schools in Afghanistan is a harder sell than spending four hundred billion on defense; fear is more compelling than

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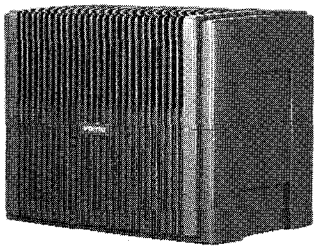

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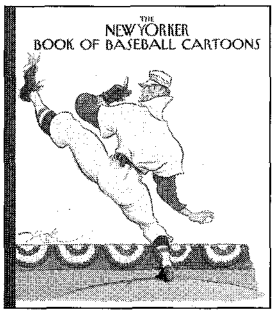

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foresight. Biden admitted, “This is a place where the President’s bragging to me, ‘Mr. Chairman, I don’t do nuance’—where he has an advantage.”

I asked Thomas Carothers, an expert on democracy at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to name one project that might help change the political culture of the Arab world. He mentioned a nonprofit group, the Center for International Private Enterprise, that is working to spread the idea among Arab business associations that transparency and the rule of law will attract foreign investment. Carothers has studied democracy-building programs for two decades, and he compared them to painting the Golden Gate Bridge. His experience has left him wary of the rhetoric coming out of Washington these days. Compared with the revolutions of 1989 in Central Europe, he said, “this is a made-in-Washington democratic transformation. It’s very hard to do it when there are no democratic trends in the area.” Success can come only over a period of years, mainly by finding local groups and helping them do what they already want to do. The United States achieved this in Serbia during the late nineties—funding pro-democracy student groups that helped in the overthrow of the Milosevic dictatorship. It’s possible for something of the kind to occur in Muslim countries. Government agencies and nonprofit groups could fund new organizations like the Iranian dissident Ladan Boroumand’s democracy foundation, whose Web site will post a library of liberal ideas for young people in Iran to read behind the privacy of their computer screens. But all this will take more time and commitment than American Administrations, including the present one, have been interested in showing.

“It’s long-term, it’s not flashy, it’s not expensive,” Carothers said. “All of our programs now are showy, expensive, big-impact. And maybe we need to do that, but we also need to do things for fifteen to twenty years down the line.” When we spoke, he had just returned from the former Soviet republics, which he described as “a democratic wasteland.” A decade ago, reform in those countries seemed as urgent as it now seems in the Middle East; but America’s attention moved on, and the Administration has made its peace with the region’s post-Soviet strongmen. The President, Carothers said, has failed to make the struggle to liberalize the Muslim world the concern of ordinary Americans—to take one small example, by creating high-school exchange programs. “He’s unable to connect it to us in any way other than fear,” Carothers said. “And I don’t think that’s going to do it.”

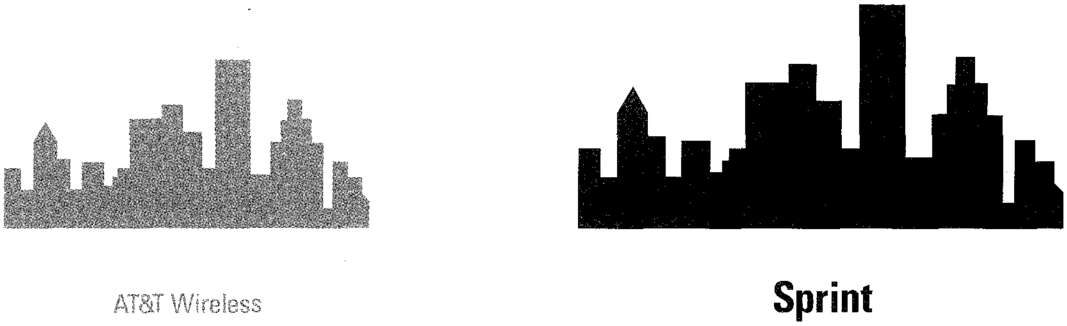
A political struggle on the part of a democracy requires the involvement of the public, not as frightened spectators but as active participants. In recent decades, our leaders—both Democrats and Republicans—have asked very little of us as citizens, to the point where the word itself sounds quaint. The dominant theme of American politics since the nineteen-sixties has been freedom: cultural freedoms under Democrats, economic freedoms under Republicans. The pursuit of happiness became a private affair, and the sense of civic responsibility withered among liberals and conservatives alike. The political choice was between two versions of hedonism.

In the days that followed the September 11th attacks, we saw the early stages of something like a national self-mobilization. The long lines of would-be blood donors, the volunteers converging on lower Manhattan from around the country, the fumbling public efforts at understanding Islam: the response took on very personal tones. People spoke as if they wanted to change their lives. An unemployed young video producer waiting to give blood in Brooklyn said to me, “I volunteered so I could be part of something. All over the world, people do something for an ideal. I’ve been at no point in my life when I could say something I’ve done has affected mankind.” A generation legendary for its self-centeredness seemed to grasp that here was a historic chance to aim for something greater.

It has been much remarked that President Bush did nothing to tap this palpable desire among ordinary people to join a larger effort. Americans were told to go shopping and watch out for suspicious activity. Nothing would ever be the same, and everything was just the same. “How urgent can this be if I tell you this is a great crisis and, at the time we’re marching to war, I give the single largest tax cut in the history of the United States of America?” Biden said. The tax cuts haven’t just left the country fiscally unsound during wartime; their inequity has been terrible for morale. But the President’s failure to call for shared, equal sacrifice followed directly on the governing spirit of the modern Republican Party. After years of a sustained assault on the idea of collective action, there was no ideological foundation left on which Bush could stand up and ask what Americans can do for their country. We haven’t been asked to study Arabic, to join the foreign service or international aid groups, to form a national civil reserve for emergencies—or even to pay off the cost of the war in our own time. The war’s burdens are borne solely by a few hundred thousand volunteer soldiers.

Perhaps this was a shrewd political intuition on Bush’s part—a recognition that Americans, for all their passion after September 11th, would inevitably slouch back to their sofas. It’s fair to ask, though, how a body politic as out of shape as ours is likely to make it over the long, hard slog of wartime; how convincingly we can export liberal democratic values when our own version shows so many signs of atrophy; how much solidarity we can expect to muster for Afghanis and Iraqis when we’re asked to feel so little for one another.

“Why does not democracy believe in itself with passion?” Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., asked in “The Vital Center,” his 1949 book about totalitarianism and America’s anxious postwar mood. “Why is freedom not a fighting faith?” The only hope (Schlesinger turned to Walt Whitman for the words—who else?) lay in “the exercise of Democracy.” The process of struggling for freedom, accepting conflict, tolerating uncertainty, joining community—this would allow democracy to survive and not die. What if we now find ourselves, at this stage of thickening maturity, in the middle of a new crisis that requires us to act like citizens of a democracy? It’s impossible to know how the public would respond to a political party that spoke about these things—because, so far, no party has. ♦



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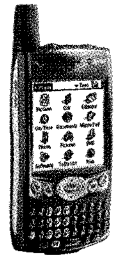

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### OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

# ROUTE 3

*What I saw on the road through New Jersey.*

BY IAN FRAZIER

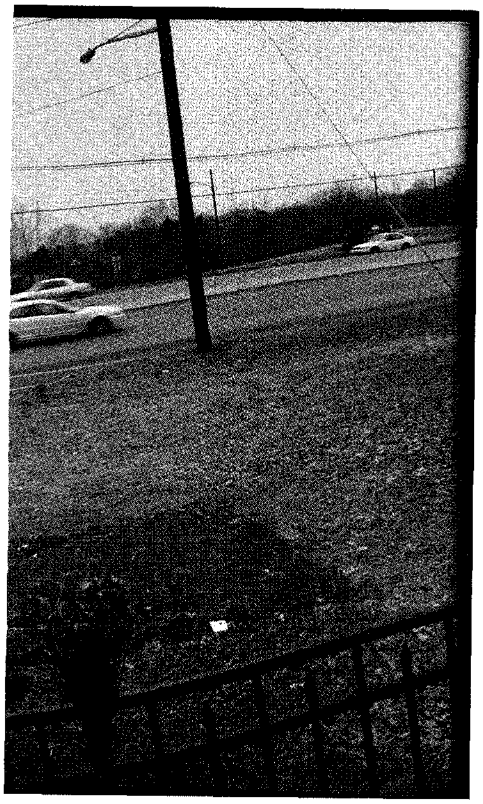
Between me in a New Jersey suburb and New York City, fifteen-some miles to the east, runs a highway called Route 3. For many bus and car commuters, it is essentially the only direct road from here (and other suburbs) to there. To say that billions of vehicles use it daily is an exaggeration, traffic experts will tell you. People have written songs about the fabled Route 66, and the phrase "New Jersey Turnpike" has a metrical neatness that fits it into certain rock-and-roll tunes; but as far as I know nobody has sung about Route 3. Its unavoidable, traffic-packed, un-alluring, grimly lifelike quality defeats the lyric impulse, probably. Route 3 starts on the low north-south New Jersey ridges where many suburbs are, crosses the miles-wide swamp that developers started referring to as the Meadowlands some years ago, rises to another ridge near the Hudson River, and joins an artery bringing an accumulation of traffic down the spinning drain into the Lincoln Tunnel and, at the other end, the vast retort of Manhattan.

*At the foot of the driveway that leads to the Holy Face Monastery, beside Route 3, is a statue of Jesus, his arms raised as if in benedictio*

An eastbound traveller on Route 3 sometimes has the serrated skyline of midtown straight ahead. At certain times of the year during the morning commute, the sun comes up right behind the city; the shadows of the buildings theoretically stretch the whole length of the highway, and slide backward gradually, like tide. When the road reaches the Meadowlands, the sky opens out, with the tall light poles of the Giants Stadium parking lot receding to a remote vanishing point and the pools of swamp water perfectly reflecting the reeds along their edges, the radio towers, the clouds, and the intricate undersides of cautious airplanes descending to Newark Airport. Along much of the road on either side, the landscape is as ordinary as ordinary America can be: conventioneers' hotels and discount stores and fast-food restaurants and office complexes and Home Depot and Best Buy and Ethan Allen, most of the buildings long and low, distributed in the spread-out style of American highway architecture. And then suddenly, just before the Lincoln Tunnel, that ordinariness ends, and you're in jostling, close-up surroundings about to become New York. At no other entry to the city is the transition between it and everyday, anywhere U.S.A. so quick.

I usually travel to and from the city by bus. The one I take to go home leaves from the fourth floor of the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Most bus commuters sensibly occupy themselves with newspapers, laptops, CD players, and so on. I always try to get a window seat and then look at the scenery. If this were a ride at an amusement park, I would pay to go on it. The bus comes out of the terminal on a high ramp above Tenth Avenue. For just a moment you can see clear down Tenth, a deep ravine usually filled at the bottom with taxicabs. From the ramp, the bus descends into the tunnel, either straight or in a loop, depending on traffic and time of day. Once in the tunnel, it can be there forever. Brake lights on vehicles ahead reflect on the bus ceiling and tint people's faces. During an evening rush hour, my son and I observed a foot sticking up from the narrow electric tram cart that runs on a track along the tunnel wall. The foot had on a work boot and the shin was wearing work pants. We decided that it must belong to a tunnel worker who was out of sight down in the cart taking a nap.

When the bus leaves the tunnel, it is in Weehawken, New Jersey. It climbs the elevated spiral of highway that people call the helix, and then for a mile or so there's a complicated section of road where traffic bound in different directions sorts itself out. Then the bus turns northwest onto Route 3. At this point, it is in Secaucus. A newspaper story some years ago said that state police had seized about a ton and a quarter of cocaine in a truck just as it left a warehouse in Secaucus off Route 3. I'm not sure which warehouse it was, but I have some likely ones in mind. Route 3 in Secaucus is where the transition to ordinary America occurs; prominent on your right are two large signs that say "Royal Motel."



*the traffic. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.*

What fixed the Royal Motel in my mind, and what makes me glad, somehow, every time I pass it, was a story that appeared in the *News* in 2000. The story said that one morning, at 2:13 A.M., New York City police arrested a woman for soliciting prostitution at the corner of Tenth Avenue and Forty-sixth Street. The woman gave her name as Tacoma Hopps. The police handcuffed her, put her in the back of a Ford minivan they were using to transport suspects, and left her there while they went to make another arrest. Tacoma Hopps squeezed her hands through the handcuffs, got in the van's driver seat, and sped off downtown. Before the police, suddenly left afoot, could radio ahead to stop her, she had driven to the tunnel and through it. She then left the vehicle in Secaucus and began walking along Route 3, barefoot and carrying a green duffelbag. Secaucus police spotted her. In the duffelbag were two bulletproof vests, a pistol clip containing twenty-five hollow-point bullets, and a New York City Police radio, parking permit, and vehicle keys. When the New York police arrested her, she had given her home address as the Royal Motel. When the Secaucus police arrested her, that was apparently where she was going.

Beyond Secaucus, the bus crosses the wide Hackensack River; the fact that there are no other vehicle bridges over the Hackensack for miles upstream and down contributes to Route 3's congestion. West of the river, on the bus's right, you see the Continental Airlines Arena and Giants Stadium. Recently, developers announced that behind the stadium they're going to build a hundred-and-four-acre recreation complex, with indoor ski slopes and a surfing pool, to be called Xanadu. Beyond the stadium is swamp and another big river, the Passaic. Then come hills and houses, and trees instead of reeds. In some places here, the road's shoulders glitter with a boa of trash; in others, the right lane merges almost undetectably with large, vague parking lots around commercial enterprises. One of these is the Tick Tock Diner, a chrome Art Deco structure outlined in four colors of neon and surmounted by clocks. When Sean J. Richard, a labor racketeer associated with New Jersey's DeCavalcante family, heard a while back that he was to meet with

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a capo (alleged) from New York's Lucchese family named Dominic Truscello in a van outside the Tick Tock Diner, Mr. Richard became so frightened that he soon decided to turn state's evidence. His testimony is expected to put a few people in jail.

Across from the Tick Tock, the hundred-and-twenty-seven-acre factory and laboratory compound of Hoffman-La Roche Pharmaceuticals rises in buildings of utopian whiteness, one upon the next. On the top of the highest building is the lighted logo of the company—"Roche," inside a capsule-shaped border. Valium, the company's famous sedative, introduced in 1963, earned a lot of the money that built this Acropolis of pharmaceuticals. Anxiety sufferers of that era probably remember the Valium pill. It was small and round, of a color between yellow and white. On one side a thin, fine score divided the pill into halves; on the other was the word "ROCHE" and beneath it the number 5 (meaning milligrams). A friend who works as a statistician for the company tells me that although the formula for Valium went out of patent a long time ago and cheaper versions exist, the company still sells a lot of it. Evidently, the name and the look of the Roche pill have acquired a magic that transcends chemistry. Leo H. Sternbach, Valium's inventor, is ninety-five years old and lives not far from me. My friend says that when Mr. Sternbach stops by the lab, as he still occasionally does, he is treated like a king.

Past Hoffman-La Roche on the same side of the street, at the top of a hill with a lawn, the Holy Face Monastery sits half out of sight behind trees. At the foot of the driveway, right beside Route 3, the monastery has erected a shrine. It is a statue of Jesus on a white brick pedestal with concrete tablets nearby bearing the Ten Commandments. Jesus' arms are raised as if in benediction of the traffic; the position of one hand is such that a beer can just fits in it, a coincidence that jokesters take advantage of. I have often seen people, usually alone, praying before the shrine in the mornings and later in the day. They stand with heads bared and bowed and hands clasped at their waists, sometimes so deep in prayer that they seem to be in another dimension.

Now the bus turns off Route 3 at the Grove Street, Montclair/Paterson exit. It proceeds along Grove, stopping occasionally to let passengers out. When it pulls over, the branches of trees along the street brush the bus's top and side. To a suburbanite just come from the city, the scratching of branches and leaves on metal is the sound of being home.

As a grownup, I have lived in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Montana. Now I live in the New Jersey town of Montclair. Recently, a friend who's a rancher in Wyoming sent me a card saying he finds it hard to believe that he has a friend who lives in New Jersey. Sometimes I find it hard to believe I'm here, myself. When I lived in the city, I had the usual New Yorker's disdain for this state. Oddly, though, I was attracted to it, too. I used to come over to Jersey a lot, maybe because it reminded me of Ohio and other places I love in the middle of the country. I like being on the continent, rather than slightly offshore. I get a sense that I'm more connected to it; when there's a big snowstorm, for example, I imagine the snow stretching from here back across the Alleghenies to Ohio in unbroken white. And I like the feeling that I'm near the city but also just out of its range.

Suburban New Jersey is a bunch of different stuff mixed up like a garage sale. George Washington kept his Army in this area throughout a year of the Revolutionary War; the British held the city, and he wanted to be close to it yet strategically hard for them to get to. His ally the Marquis de Lafayette stayed in a farmhouse on Valley Road in Upper Montclair. A local chapter of the D.A.R. has preserved the farmhouse's flat stone doorstep near the spot where the house was. The memorial, with the stone, a small plaque, and a flagpole, is in a little niche in the town's business district. On one side of the niche is a photo-finishing-and-retouching store, on the other a place called the Backrub Shoppe (recently closed), which offered backrubs lasting from ten minutes up to an hour.

On long walks through suburbs whose names I sometimes can't keep straight—Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, Brookside, Nutley, Passaic, Garfield, Lodi, Hasbrouck Heights, Hackensack, Teaneck, Leonia—I've encountered the New Jersey miscellany up close. Giant oil tanks cluster below expensive houses

## PIGEONS AT DAWN

Extraordinary efforts are being made
To hide things from us, my friend.
Some stay up into the wee hours
To search their souls,
Others undress each other in darkened rooms.

The creaky old elevator
Took us down to the icy cellar first
To show us a mop and a bucket
Before it deigned to ascend again
With a sigh of exasperation.

Under the vast, early-dawn sky
The city lay silent before us.
Everything on hold:
Rooftops and water towers,
Clouds and wisps of white smoke.

We must be patient, we told ourselves,
See if the pigeons will coo now
For the one who comes to her window
To feed them angel cake,
All but invisible, but for her slender arm.

—*Charles Simic*

surrounded by hedges not far from abandoned factories with high brick smokestacks; a Spanish-speaking store that sells live chickens is near a Polish night club off a teeming eight-lane highway; a Greek church on a festival day roasts goats in fifty-five-gallon drums in its parking lot down the road from tall white Presbyterian churches that were built when everything around was countryside. Neighborhoods go from fancy to industrial to shabby without apparent reason, and you can't predict what the next corner will be.

From a car on a highway, though, suburban New Jersey looks so nondescript and ordinary as to be invisible. The eye, in passing, registers not this specific place but a generic likeness that has reproduced itself all across the country. In the Montclair Art Museum is a room of landscape paintings by the artist George Inness, who lived in Montclair from 1885 to 1894. They show the land before it was developed and paved. Inness's winter-gray hilltop tree lines, his ridges sloping underfoot, and his high sky lit by the presence of the ocean over the horizon are all still here, somewhere among the roads and buildings and wires now obscuring them.

That invisibility may explain, partly, why commuters on the bus don't bother to look out the window: everything there has been seen and reseen and accounted for until it might as well be a blank wall. The only people who regularly look out the bus window are young children. Except during traffic delays, the one time the adult passengers all sit up and stare out en masse is when the bus is driven by a man named Sal. Sal is short and has a boyish (though graying) shock of hair. His movements are more antic than usual for a bus driver. Sal is the only bus driver I know of who seems to notice what's along the road. When he sees something that interests him, he takes up the microphone and announces it to the passengers. Colorful Halloween displays, Christmas lights, a yard full of yellow and purple crocuses, the Goodyear blimp over Giants Stadium—all rate an excited mention by Sal, followed by his usual exclamation: "Oh-boy-oh-boy-oh-boy-oh-boy!"

When the bus gets to the Port Authority and is going up the ramp, Sal always says, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, I'd like to welcome you to the beautiful Caribbean island of Aruba"—or St. Martin, Barbuda, St. Thomas, etc.—"where the temperature is a sunny seventy-eight degrees. Complimentary beverages will be served upon arrival, don't forget to put on your sunblock, and have a happy day! Cha-cha-cha!" Inside the terminal, when he opens the bus door in the line of buses that are disembarking passengers, he says, "Ahh, smell that fresh Caribbean air!"

For a while after September 11th, Sal quit doing his announcements. His bus pulled into the station in silence, with the passengers waiting expectantly but in vain. The loss of Sal's announcements, minor as it was, saddened me out of proportion. Without some silliness, what is life for? Later, though, to general relief, Sal went back to giving what he calls his "spiels."

Although I shouldn't, I often let New Jersey traffic get to me. When I drive here, I am often beeped at for coming to a complete stop at stop signs, not running yellow lights, yielding the right of way at intersections, and following other rules of the road which local practice has discarded. At each beep, I jump and swear. After the relatively easygoing traffic of Montana, New Jersey driving had a predatory fierceness I wasn't ready for. Also, not long after we moved, a man in Englewood was run over and killed in a Starbucks while sitting at a table near the window and working on his laptop. That increased my fears.

New Jersey is the fourth-smallest state in the country and the most densely populated. Especially in areas where traffic is at its worst, room for new roads can't be found. About five and a half million people in New Jersey have driver's licenses, and they drive more than seven million registered vehicles. Traffic planners sometimes mention tepid-sounding solutions like new toll systems to encourage off-peak travel or high-tech ways of alerting drivers to jams.

In fact, the main method for dealing with so many cars in so small a space is the traditional one of ad-hoc free-for-all. A few years ago, in a survey of New Jersey drivers done by the Insurance

Council of New Jersey and the state's AAA, fifty-two per cent said that they are very angry or moderately angry when they drive. About forty per cent admitted that they are likely to curse or make gestures at other drivers, or to use their vehicles to punish them by tailgating, flashing high beams, slowing down to block them in a lane, etc.

The morning rush hour into the city has been getting earlier every year, newspapers say. It used to begin between six o'clock and seven, and now begins between five and six. Nearly a million vehicles cross into Manhattan from various directions every day. The *News* says that if a similar number of vehicles were lined up single file they would stretch from New York City to Los Angeles. And yet no New Jersey highway is among the worst ten places for traffic congestion in the nation, as drivers in Atlanta or Seattle or Los Angeles can testify. To further add to Route 3's averageness, the traffic on it is not much different from traffic anywhere.

Recently, I decided to walk to the city along Route 3. Observing scenery makes me imagine going out in it, and I wanted to see the road other than through glass. From the bus, walking on the shoulder appeared to be possible. Twelve miles from the Grove Street exit to the Lincoln Tunnel did not seem far, and once there I would take the Weehawken ferry, because the tunnel does not have a walkway open to pedestrians. I hadn't been on a long ramble for a while. I put on broken-in shoes and brought a map, in case I had to detour. At about noon of a mild day in late fall, I set out.

From the railing of the Grove Street bridge, Route 3 curved out of sight to the east amid a dwindling succession of multi-armed towers carrying high-tension lines. At this off-peak hour, the road was, as usual, full of cars going fast. I chose the right-hand, eastbound lanes, because that side seemed to have more room. I came down the ramp, along the margin. Of course there was no sidewalk, but neither were there signs forbidding pedestrians. I passed the Holy Face Monastery and shrine. The shoulder was so irregular that I had to keep climbing over the guardrail and back again and tromping through weeds. The traffic blew by, thrumming with the dull rubber thumps of tires hitting pavement seams.

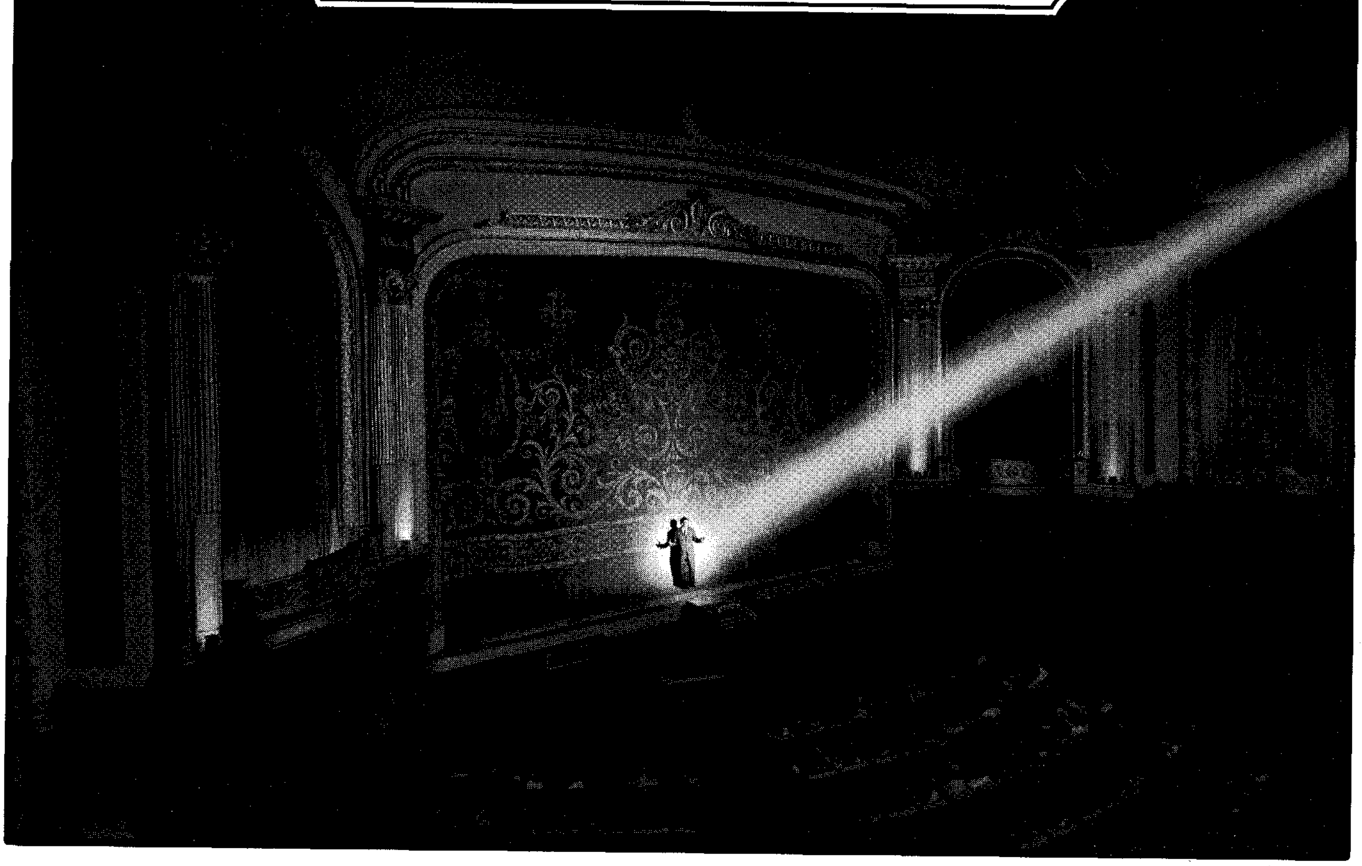
The earth beside this kind of highway is like no earth that ever was. Neither cultivated nor natural, it's beside-the-point, completely unnoticed, and slightly blurred from being passed so often and so fast. And yet plants still grow in it, luxuriantly—ailanthus, and sumac, and milkweed, and lots of others that know how to accommodate themselves to us. In the swampy parts, the common reed would take over the roadway in a blink if the traffic stopped.

The tangled brush and the reeds collect an omnium-gatherum of trash. I saw broken CDs, hubcaps, coils of wire, patient-consent forms for various acupuncture procedures, pieces of aluminum siding, fragments of chrome, shards of safety glass, Dunkin' Donuts coffee cups, condom wrappers, knocked-over road signs, burned-out highway flares, a highlighter pen, a surgical glove, nameless pieces of discarded rusty machinery, a yellow rain slicker with "Macy's Studio" on the back . . . Scattered through the grass and weeds for miles were large, bright-colored plastic sequins. Oddly, I knew where they had come from. Once, while on the bus, I saw a parade float—probably from the Puerto Rican Day Parade, held in the city—pull up alongside and then speed by. A car must have been towing it, though I don't remember the car. The float was going at least seventy, shimmying and wobbling, banners flapping, and these sequins were blowing off it in handfuls and billowing behind.

Sometimes, walking beside Route 3 got to be too much, owing to the narrowness of the shoulder or the thickness of the undergrowth, and then I would cut over to one or another smaller road nearby. In the Meadowlands, there are some noplace avenues you might expect to find in a Florida swamp where the developers have given up; on an access-type road, an eight-story office building of Smith Barney stands all by itself in the reeds. Farther on, Route 3 has the aspect of a parkway, running through expanses of grass that are easy to stroll across. Nothing occupies this short-grass region but occasional Canada geese keeping one eye on the traffic, like bartenders watching a drunk.

The challenging part of my journey would be crossing the Hackensack River. I had two choices, the westbound bridge or the eastbound bridge. Both are narrow and lack walkways, though they do have little ledges like wide curbs at the sides where a walkway should be. The westbound bridge offered the safety advantage of traffic coming at me rather than from behind; at that proximity to cars, however, it's better not to see. Also, the westbound bridge is a half mile long, and its railing is not high. I whacked through the reeds in the median to the eastbound bridge. It is shorter, because the river here is narrower. Here, at least, the bridge's other side was in sight. I put on the Macy's Studio slicker for increased visibility and started across. Walking on the curb ledge required a one-foot-in-front-of-the-other gait as the trucks and cars went by at sixty-five m.p.h. an arm's length away. I held the gritty railing with my right hand. Below, the brown Hackensack swirled around the wooden pilings of a former bridge. In these narrow confines, the traffic noise was a top-volume roar. After a long several minutes, I made it to the other side.

From there my way became complicated—now on Route 3, now detouring around an impassable part, now backtracking after a shoulder I'd been following dead-ended at a fence. In no-man's regions I sometimes found foot trails leading through the grass, but no clue about who had made them. By sunset, I was walking up a sloping sidewalk in Union City above approach lanes for the tunnel, and going faster than the traffic inbound. I went down to Boulevard East, turned onto a lane under the elevated span, crossed a road running along the river, and sat down to rest on a bench in a little waterfront park. Across the river was a recompense



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for five hours of walking: the city, its lights diffusing in the mist of faint clouds above it, the whole varied sequence of glittering buildings cropped ruler-straight at the bottom by the Hudson's dark waterline.

I walked to the ferry, paid five dollars for a ticket, got on, and in six minutes crossed to the pier at Thirty-eighth Street. At the Port Authority, I caught a six-thirty bus, wedging myself in the very back row among four other middle-aged guys. The one next to me had a high forehead and a loosened tie. He was fooling with his laptop, and as the bus came through the tunnel he put on a DVD of a Bruce Springsteen concert and began to listen to it with earphones. He had it turned up so loud that the rest of us could hear, and he occasionally hummed tone-deafly along. We could have objected—but we were in New Jersey and it was Bruce, after all. The back seat, and the whole bus, with its closed-in, comfortably crowded atmosphere of people going home, seemed without any connection at all to the highway howling inaudibly just outside.

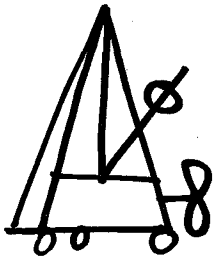
That night, I was shook up and couldn't sleep—as if walking beside so much noise and speed had rearranged my molecules. I thought of the commuter buses nose-to-tail in line for the tunnel, and the mass of idling cars converging. To live by the internal-combustion engine is to live on top of fire; a cyclone of explosions carries us along.

Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton fought their famous duel on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River, in the town of Weehawken, two hundred years ago this July. Aside from the construction of the Lincoln Tunnel, the duel is the biggest thing that ever happened in Weehawken or nearby. The town is not large, and the tunnel's toll plaza and approaches take up a lot of it; sometimes as the bus climbs through Weehawken I wonder if the duel site might be close, or even under the wheels. History books say the duel was held "on the Weehawken duelling grounds," which sounds specific. When I called the Weehawken Public Library and asked the librarian if she knew where the site was, she immediately referred me to the town's expert on local history, Edward A. Fleckenstein.

Mr. Fleckenstein lives atop the Weehawken cliff, in a house with a view across the Hudson River and straight down Forty-second Street. He kindly agreed to see me, and met me at the door with his brother George. Both men are taller than average, hale, genial, and formal; though it was a Saturday morning, both had on jackets and ties. Edward is a semi-retired attorney specializing in estates and corporate law, and George used to run the family meatpacking business. Edward is eighty-four and George is eighty-two. Both are bachelors and have lived in this house all their lives.

In a study lined with pictures of their ancestors, Edward and George sketched a time-lapse picture of Weehawken and surroundings. The midtown skyline opposite had only one notable skyscraper, the Paramount Building on Forty-third Street, when they were young boys. By the time they were teen-agers, the Chrysler Building, the Empire State, and Rockefeller Center had all gone up, and midtown looked a lot like it does now. The Lincoln Tunnel came in in 1937; Edward, a boy of sixteen, was among the first to walk through it at the opening ceremony. Heading west from the tunnel, you could not go anyplace very directly, because that way was the swamp, which people called just "the swamp" and not the Meadowlands. Edward remembers looking across the swamp while on a family outing and predicting that one day a road would go straight across it. His words were prophetic; when he was just out of law school, construction started on Route 3. The road was finished across the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers by 1950, and by '51 it was a busy highway with traffic jams.

Traffic had always been bad around here, Edward Fleckenstein pointed out. "Before the tunnel, there were long lines of wagons and cars, clear up to the top of the cliff, waiting to get on the ferry to the city," he said. "The tunnel was supposed to take care of that. In those days, we had an ambitious mayor, J. G. Meister, and he was a big booster for the tunnel. He said it would be such an honor for the town. One of the original ideas for the tunnel was for it to emerge on the other side of the next ridge, in Secaucus. And that probably would have been better, in hindsight, because of course it's more open over there and you wouldn't have the congestion of being confined in these hills. But Mayor Meister and other Weehawken supporters prevailed, and the tunnel came out in Weehawken. They said they would name it the Weehawken Midtown Tunnel, but, once there was the George Washington Bridge, naturally this had to be the Lincoln Tunnel."



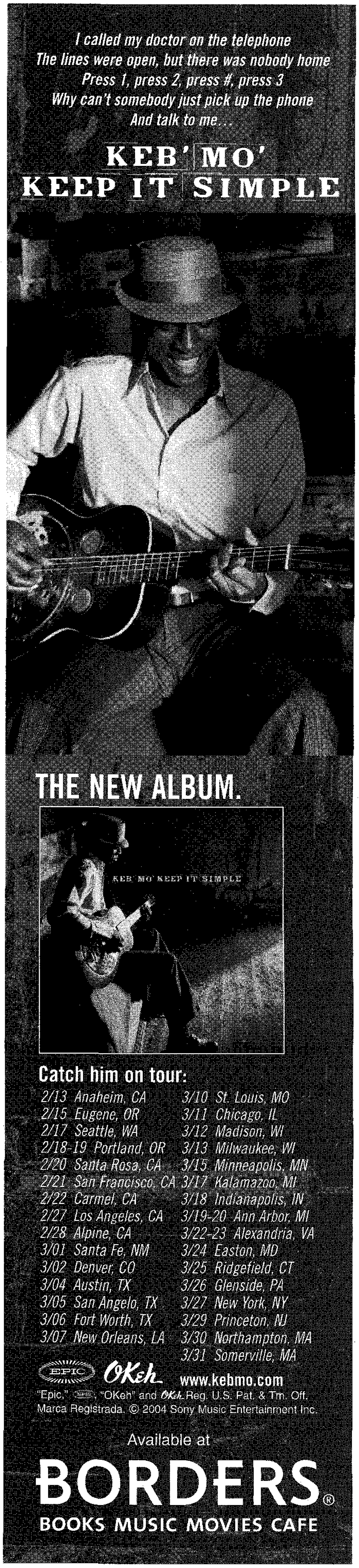
Conversation soon turned to the town's other great event, the Burr-Hamilton duel. Referring to photocopies of historical documents, Edward Fleckenstein said where he thought the duelling grounds were, and why he thought so. His brother excused himself to go to church services. Edward said he would show me where the site was, and he put on his fedora and topcoat and we got in my car. First, we stopped at the Hamilton memorial, a bust on a column at the cliff's edge. Whether Hamilton fired at Burr or deliberately into the air is unclear; he missed, in any event, and Burr's shot hit him in the abdomen. Hamilton knew at once that the wound was mortal. He fell against a large rock; the rock is now next to the column, part of the memorial. Hamilton was rowed back across the river to a friend's house in Greenwich Village, where he said goodbye to his wife and children and died the next day.

The site of the duelling grounds—about a hundred feet south of the end of the cliff, by Mr. Fleckenstein's estimation—takes some effort to visualize. In the car, he directed me to a street under the elevated highway and then onto a cinder lane near the waterfront. This place used to be a bay, he said. A cliff, roughly parallel to the present cliff but not as high, enclosed the bay at one end. There was a gravel beach accessible only by water, and above the beach, at the base of the cliff, a ledge about fifty feet long. Duellers used to row over from the city, pull their boats up on the beach, and fight their duels on the ledge. Construction of a county road levelled the cliff and ledge in 1859, and afterward railroad builders put tracks through. The landfill that buried the bay disguised the spot further.

Mr. Fleckenstein did not want to walk around in the eleven-degree cold and the wind, so after I took him home and thanked him a lot I came back. At least seventy duels were fought on this spot, he had told me. The combatants came here because duelling was illegal in New York. (New Jersey did not outlaw it until later in the eighteen-hundreds.) Hamilton and Burr were not the only famous duellers. DeWitt Clinton, governor of New York and father of the Erie Canal, fought a John Swartwout here and wounded him in the left leg about five inches above the ankle on the fifth shot. Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of the Battle of Lake Erie ("We have met the enemy, and they are ours"), duelled Captain John Heath, neither man injured; Perry's second in that duel was Commodore Stephen Decatur ("Our country, right or wrong"), who was himself later killed in a duel in Maryland. Before Burr duelled Hamilton, he fought John Barker Church, Hamilton's brother-in-law, on this ground, neither man injured; and a Burr supporter fought and killed Hamilton's nineteen-year-old son, Philip, three years before the Burr-Hamilton duel. In all, at least thirty-six men died on the Weehawken duelling grounds.

Now the place is a construction side lot for the Lincoln Tunnel. There's an office trailer, a heap of pipe lengths, a portable john, some road-building stone, a chain-link fence, weeds, little orange plastic flags warning of buried cable. The long-ago life-and-death dramas I'd been picturing could not fit here; enterprise and time had painted out the past.

Then I looked across the river. You would have sat in the boat with your second, your pistols in their case on his lap, while someone rowed. For the twenty minutes or half an hour the journey took, you would have wondered, or tried not to wonder, about the condition in which you might come back. The far shore would grow closer, New York would diminish behind. The great city, the river in between, and this shore of scary possibility haven't changed. For questions of honor that we would find trivial or hard to understand, the touchy white men who founded our country sometimes shot each other to death within a thousand feet or so of where the Lincoln Tunnel toll booths are now. ♦



*I called my doctor on the telephone*
*The lines were open, but there was nobody home*
*Press 1, press 2, press #, press 3*
*Why can't somebody just pick up the phone*
*And talk to me...*

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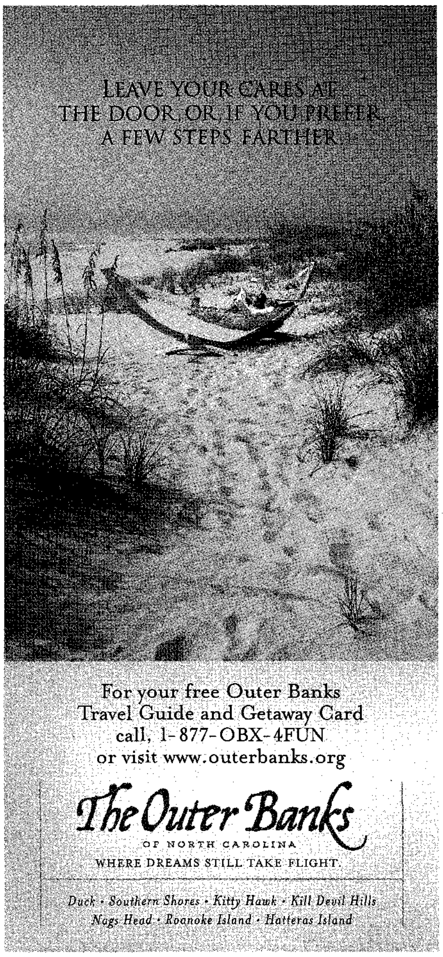
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# ORACLE BONES

*A wandering poet, a mysterious suicide, and a battle over an alphabet.*

BY PETER HESSLER

## THE BOOK

In the library of the Anyang Archeological Work Station, the title of a book caught my eye: "Our Country's Shang and Zhou Bronzes Looted by American Imperialists." I had travelled to Anyang, a small city in the northern Chinese province of Henan, to study the local antiquities. According to conventional history, this region was the capital of the Shang dynasty, which flourished for nearly six centuries before being conquered by the Zhou, around 1045 B.C. Traditionally, the Shang's downfall has been attributed to dissolute behavior—legends depict the last emperor as a drunk who filled swimming pools with wine. But this was the first hint I'd seen of any American involvement, and I took a closer look.

No author's name was listed. The book, published in 1962, contained more than eight hundred photographs of Shang and Zhou bronze vessels (the Shang is one of the most distinctive periods of ancient Chinese metallurgy). For each vessel, the book listed an imperialist collector. The catalogue included Doris Duke (she had apparently looted nine bronzes), Avery C. Brundage (thirty vessels), and Alfred F. Pillsbury (fifty-eight).

A young Chinese archeologist was working in the library, and I asked if he knew who had written the book. "Chen Mengjia," the archeologist said. "His specialty was oracle bones. He was quite a famous poet, too."

Oracle bones are inscribed with the earliest known writing in East Asia. The bones—cattle scapulae and turtle plastrons—were used in divination ceremonies at the Shang royal court. I asked the archeologist if Chen Mengjia was still in China.

"He's dead," the young man said. "He killed himself during the Cultural Revolution."

I closed the book and asked if there was anybody left at Anyang who had known Chen.

"Talk to Old Yang," the archeologist said. "He was in Beijing with Chen when he killed himself. You can find Old Yang just across the courtyard."

There were only a few people working full time at the Anyang station, which consisted of nearly a dozen concrete buildings surrounded by cornfields. Many of the structures had been built solely to house artifacts. Wind rustled through the parasol trees, and occasionally a train moaned in the distance as it rolled toward Beijing, six hours away. Otherwise, the complex was silent. It had high concrete walls topped by barbed wire.

I met Old Yang—Yang Xizhang—in a dusty conference room. He was sixty-six years old, and his teeth had been extravagantly silvered; they startled me every time he smiled, like the glint of an unexpected relic. Old Yang told me that Chen Mengjia had catalogued the bronzes in the nineteen-forties. Chen was living in the United States then, with his wife, Zhao Luorui, who was a graduate student at the University of Chicago. She had grown up in a Western-influenced Chinese family; her father, an Anglican minister, was the dean of the school of religion at Yenching University, in Beijing.

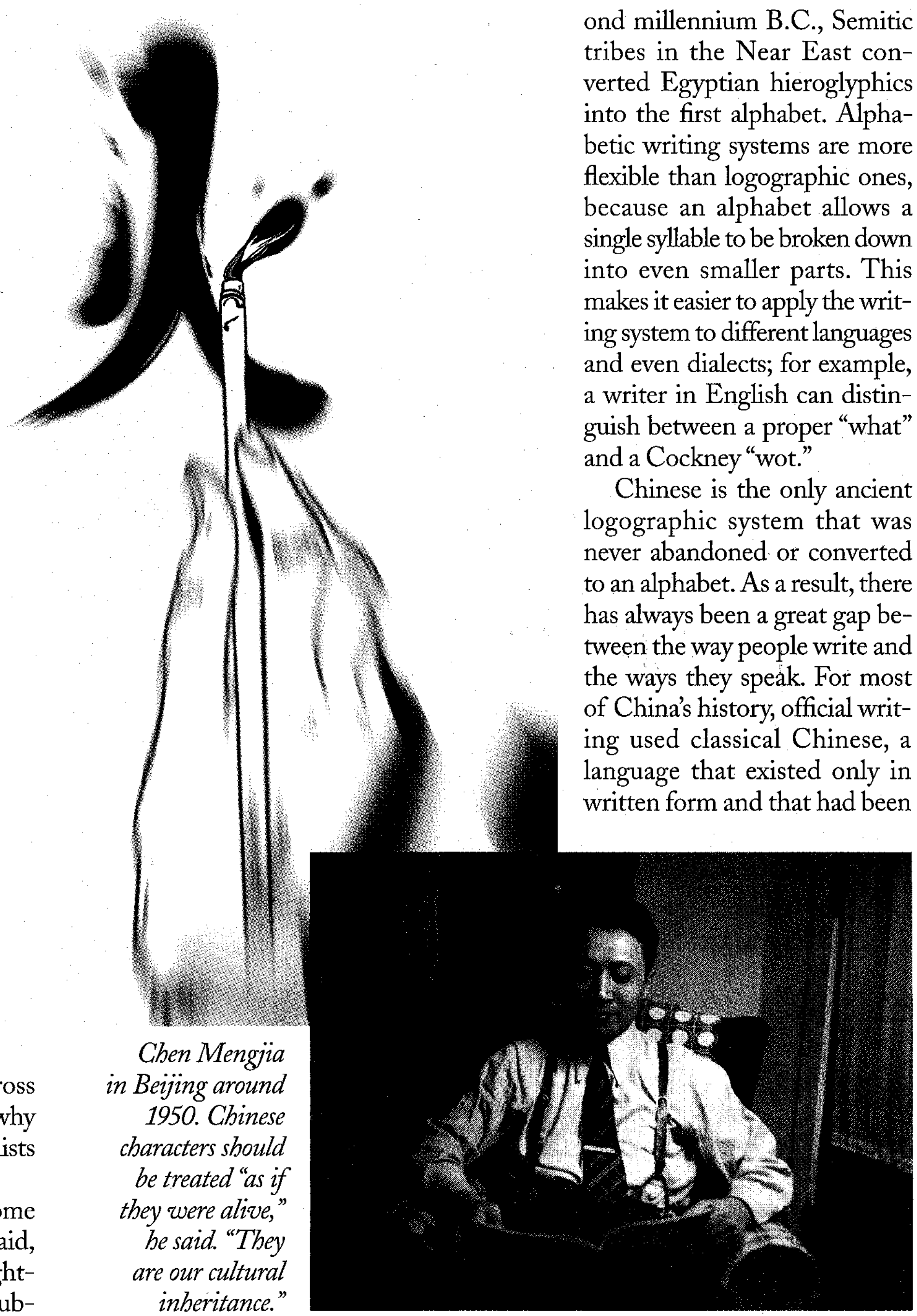
"That's one reason Chen had trouble," Old Yang said. "Her family was closely connected to foreign things. When the Cultural Revolution started, Chen Mengjia was labelled a Capitalist Intellectual. But he was especially criticized because of his Male-Female-Relationship Life Style."

The phrase was new to me, and I asked what it meant. Old Yang glanced away with an uncomfortable smile—a flash of silver. "It means this," he said finally. "You have a relationship with a woman who's not your wife."

“So Chen did this?”

“I don’t know for certain,” Old Yang said. For a moment, he gazed silently out the window behind me. I asked about Chen’s suicide, and Old Yang continued, “It happened in 1966, just as the Cultural Revolution started. When Chen first tried to kill himself, people saved him. After that, the Institute of Archeology sent me and some other young archeologists to watch him. But we couldn’t be with him twenty-four hours a day.”

To illustrate, Old Yang pointed to the window. It was a sunny afternoon; light streaked unevenly through the trees that stood outside. “Imagine that you’re in Chen’s Beijing home, looking out to the courtyard,” Old Yang said. “One day, Chen walked outside, past the window.” Old Yang made a sweeping gesture, as if following the trail of an imaginary figure moving beyond the range of our vision. “After a few minutes, we realized he was gone. We rushed outside, but it was too late—he had hanged himself.”



*Chen Mengjia in Beijing around 1950. Chinese characters should be treated “as if they were alive,” he said. “They are our cultural inheritance.”*

ISTVAN BANYAI; COURTESY CHEN MENGXIONG

Old Yang said that Chen’s wife wasn’t there, because Red Guards had been holding her across town, at Peking University. I asked why the book about American imperialists didn’t bear Chen’s name.

“In 1957, Chen had criticized some of the leaders’ ideas,” Old Yang said, “and for that he was labelled a Rightist. Rightists weren’t allowed to publish. But that book was very important, so they published it without his name.” In his office, Old Yang found a faded Institute of Archeology yearbook and opened to a page of photographs, including one of Chen as a middle-aged man. He had dimples and bright eyes and a shock of jet-black hair, and wore a traditional high-collared shirt. He had the biggest smile of anybody on the page.

Months later, in Beijing, I tracked down another scholar, in his eighties, who told me that there was much more to the story. In the nineteen-fifties, Mao Zedong had proposed replacing the Chinese writing system with an alphabet, and Chen Mengjia opposed the plan. His first major political mistake was a defense of Chinese characters.

## THE BONE

In the history of human civilization, written Chinese is unique: a script whose fundamental structural principles haven’t changed since the days of the Shang. Like Egyptian hieroglyphics, written Chinese evolved from a pictographic script (each character representing a thing or an idea) to a logographic one (each character representing a spoken syllable). During the second millennium B.C., Semitic tribes in the Near East converted Egyptian hieroglyphics into the first alphabet. Alphabetic writing systems are more flexible than logographic ones, because an alphabet allows a single syllable to be broken down into even smaller parts. This makes it easier to apply the writing system to different languages and even dialects; for example, a writer in English can distinguish between a proper “what” and a Cockney “wot.”

Chinese is the only ancient logographic system that was never abandoned or converted to an alphabet. As a result, there has always been a great gap between the way people write and the ways they speak. For most of China’s history, official writing used classical Chinese, a language that existed only in written form and that had been developed during the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.). Then, in the early twentieth century, reformers successfully campaigned to have official writing follow the northern vernacular known as Mandarin.

Spoken Chinese is not really a single language—linguists sometimes compare its diversity to that of the major Romance tongues. One philologist told me that the “dialects” spoken in Beijing and Canton are in fact languages as distinct as English and German. If China used an alphabetic script, texts would reflect these differences, but under the logographic sys-

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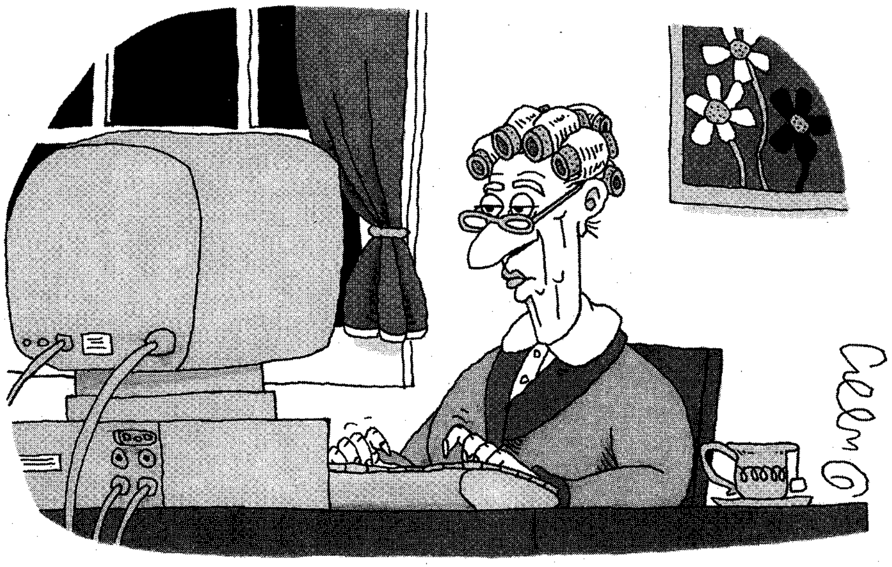


*"Oh baby . . . oh baby . . . oh baby . . ."*

• •

tem many spoken languages cannot be written. For a native of the southeastern province of Zhejiang to become literate, for example, he must first learn to speak Mandarin. Most southern Chinese write in what is essentially a second tongue.

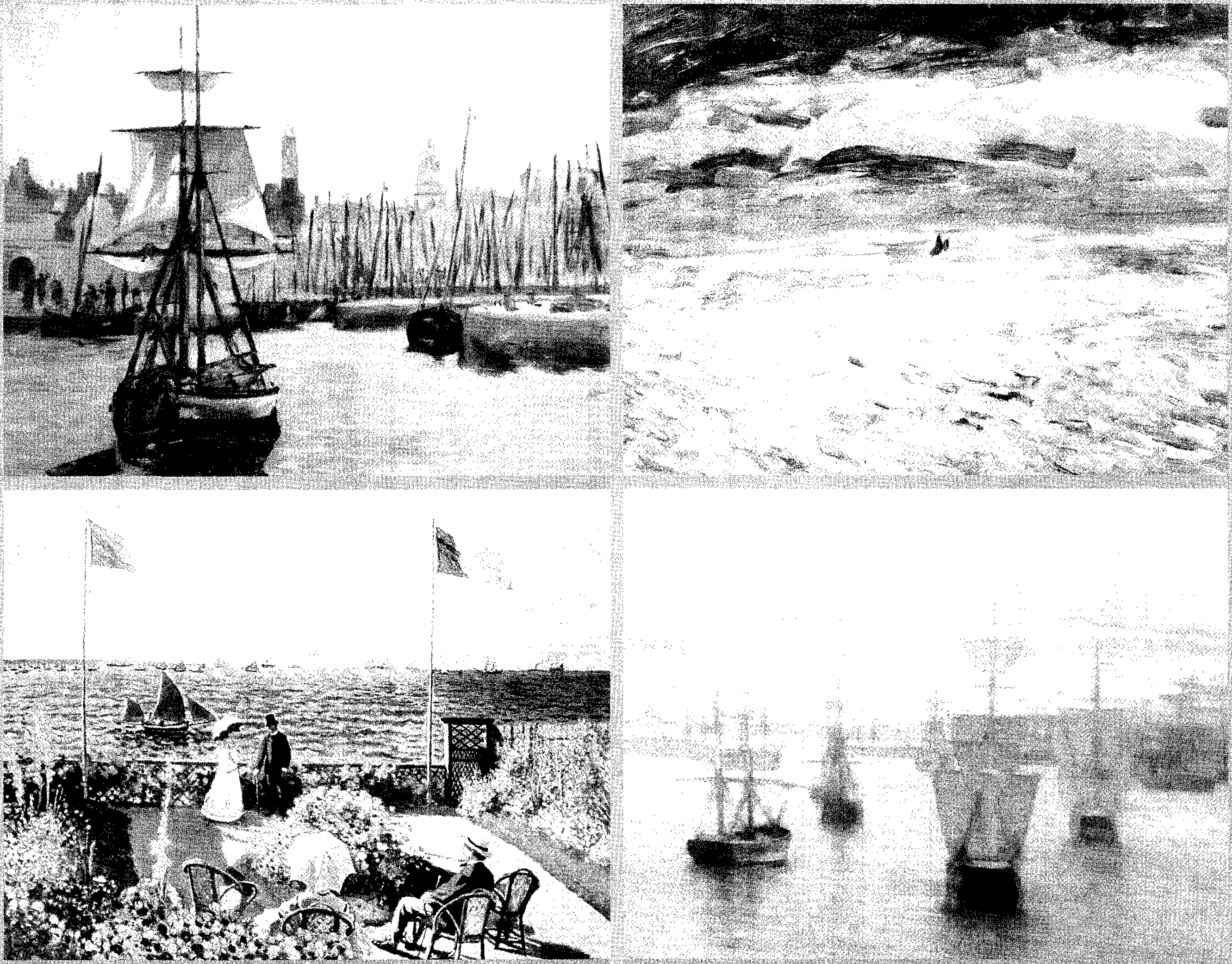
The script is technically difficult—for moderate literacy, one needs to memorize about four thousand characters. Though the characters originally contained clear visual clues to their pronunciation, many of these were rendered obsolete by changes in speech, making them even harder to remember. Despite this complexity, the Chinese have always been inspired to learn them. Much of Chinese culture revolves around writing—calligraphy is one of the most valued arts, and paintings often incorporate prominent inscriptions. During some periods, communities erected special furnaces in order to provide a proper cremation for any scrap of paper that had been dignified by writing. By the seventeenth century, China had a well-established commercial press, and literacy seems to have ranged more widely across class groups than it did in many parts of Europe. Evelyn S. Rawski, a historian at the University of Pittsburgh, has estimated basic literacy rates for Chinese males in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at between thirty and forty-five per cent—comparable to those for males in pre-industrial Japan and England.

The writing system has had other virtues, including a unique ability to transcend time and space. Regardless of where a literate Chinese comes from, he can read anything written by another Chinese. And he is never too far removed from the writing of ancient times. When the oracle bones were rediscovered, at the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese scholars were able to begin deciphering them immediately—a marked contrast with Egyptian hieroglyphics, which were unintelligible for centuries, until the excavation of the Rosetta stone.

Two years ago, I travelled to the University of California at Berkeley to visit David N. Keightley, one of the most respected oracle-bone scholars. (There are probably no more than thirty specialists worldwide.) Keightley told me that he has always been fascinated by connections between writing and Chinese ancestor worship—a practice that has been a centerpiece of Chinese culture for thousands of years.

The Shang royal court regularly held divination ceremonies, calling upon ancestors to provide information or assistance. During the ritual, a specially treated scapula or plastron was subjected to intense heat until it cracked—a physical transformation that was interpreted as the voice of the dead. Engravers then

# Manet and the Sea



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The exhibition was organized by The Art Institute of Chicago, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

(Clockwise from upper left) Details of: Edouard Manet, *The Port at Calais*, c. 1868. Private Collection. Pierre-August Renoir, *Sunset at Sea*, 1879. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA. James A.M. Whistler, *Crepuscule in Flesh Colour and Green: Valparaiso*, 1866. Tate. Presented by W. Graham Robertson 1940. Claude Monet, *Garden at Sainte-Adresse*, 1867. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase with special contributions and funds given or bequeathed by friends of the Museum, 1967.

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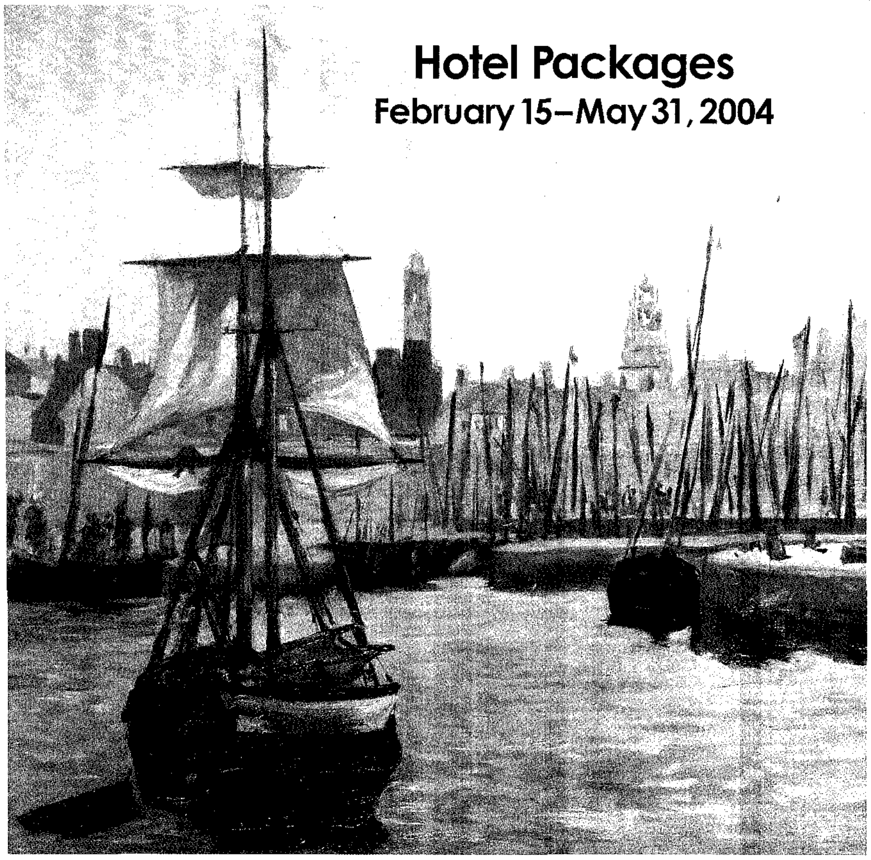

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inscribed the subject of the divination into the bone.

Excavated bones reveal that the Shang inquired about everything from warfare to childbirth, from weather to illness. They asked about the meaning of dreams. They negotiated with the dead: on one bone, an inscription proposes sacrificing three human prisoners to an ancestor, and then, presumably after an unsatisfactory crack, the next inscription offers up five prisoners. Sometimes the Shang sacrificed hundreds of people at once.

Keightley showed me a rubbing of an oracle-bone divination about a royal toothache. The plastron had been inscribed during the reign of Wu Ding, a Shang king who ruled from roughly 1200 to 1189 B.C. The King, believing that a dissatisfied ancestor was responsible for his bad tooth, was trying to discover the spirit's identity in order to prepare an appropriate sacrifice. Four names had been listed on the bone: Father Jia, Father Geng, Father Xin, Father Yi. "You have the King's dead father and three dead uncles," Keightley said. For each ancestor, multiple divinations had been performed. "And then we have another inscription: 'Offer a dog to Father Geng and split open a sheep.' That's why I think it was Father Geng who was causing the illness." Keightley paused and looked up. "Those are the notes," he said. "We have to supply the music ourselves."

## THE LETTER

In the years that followed my discovery of the book in Anyang, I sought out people who had known Chen Mengjia. Sometimes I was too late; I tried to get in touch with one close friend of his and was told that he was on his deathbed. Even when I was successful, the story of Chen seemed to change with every telling. A ninety-nine-year-old archeologist in Taiwan said he had heard a rumor that the Communists had killed Chen. On the mainland, everybody said that his death was a suicide: some mentioned the love affair; others denied it. One man told me that Chen had been involved with a movie starlet. Somebody else said that she was a Peking-opera actress. Chen's brother-in-law, Zhao Jingxun, still lives in Beijing, and he told me that Chen had tried to kill himself three times. "My sister saved him twice," Zhao said. "The third time, she had fallen asleep from exhaustion. She didn't find him until he was dead." Zhao, who was eighty-three, dismissed the rumor of an affair with a wave of his hand. "I never heard about that," he said.

The relics of Chen's life are few: some photographs, a handful of letters. The Shanghai Museum has devoted a small room to his collection of Ming-dynasty furniture, which includes some beautiful pieces that are more than four hundred years old. One side chair, carved from rare yellow rosewood, is decorated with the character *shou*, or "longevity." Ma Chengyuan, a retired curator at the museum, was a close friend of Chen's. Ma told me that they had last met in 1963, when Chen gave Ma a copy of "Our Country's Shang and Zhou Bronzes Looted by American Imperialists." Ma said with a grin, "You have to understand that that title wasn't Chen's choice."

The Shanghai Museum bought the furniture from Zhao Jingxun in 2000, after Chen's widow died. (She and Chen had no children.) Ma, who is eighty-five, gave me a copy of a letter that Chen wrote in 1966, the year he died, offering to donate his furniture. The calligraphy was beautiful; one sentence read, "That yellow rosewood chair, it might be early Ming dynasty, and of course it should be donated to the Shanghai Museum." I asked Ma if the donation might have been made out of fear that the pieces would be damaged in a political movement. "In 1963, he told me that he was concerned about their protection," Ma said. "But he never specifically mentioned political problems. We can only guess."

I searched for other artifacts that might help me piece together a record of Chen's life. No full-length biography has been published, and there are no detailed accounts of the events leading to his death. In China, the Cultural Revolution is still a shadowy period; it's permissible to write critically about those years, but there is a tacit understanding that investigations should not be pushed too far. And, because of the political dangers, few people kept diaries or saved letters.

Chen's early years are easier to fol-

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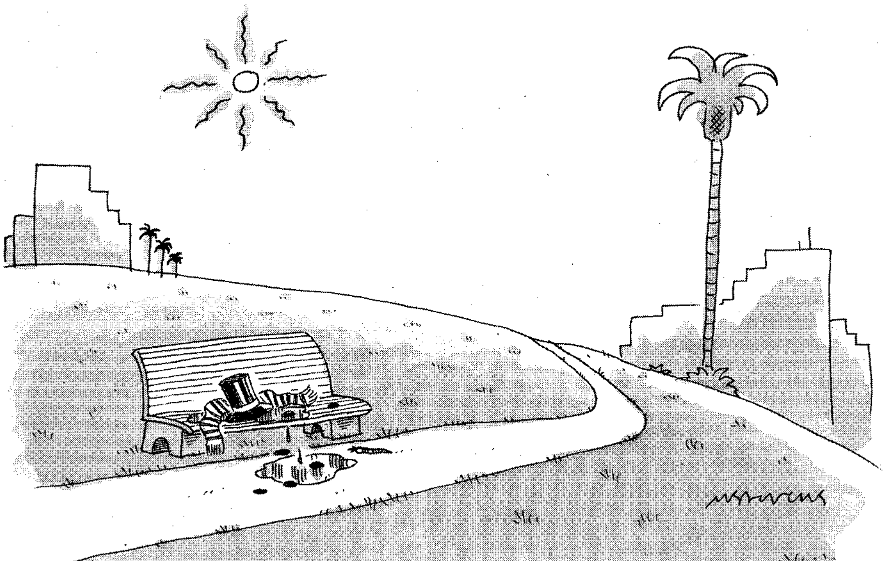
low, since he published so precociously. He was born in 1911 in the eastern city of Nanjing, where his father was a schoolteacher and a Presbyterian minister. Ten Chen siblings—five girls, five boys—lived to adulthood, and all of them graduated from college. Chen Mengjia, the seventh child, was the most brilliant. He had published his first poem as a teen-ager; by twenty, when his début volume appeared, he was famous. As Chinese poets have traditionally done, he gave himself a pen name: Wanderer. He became the youngest member of the Crescent Moon Society, a group of romantic poets who eschewed the rigid rules of classical Chinese verse.

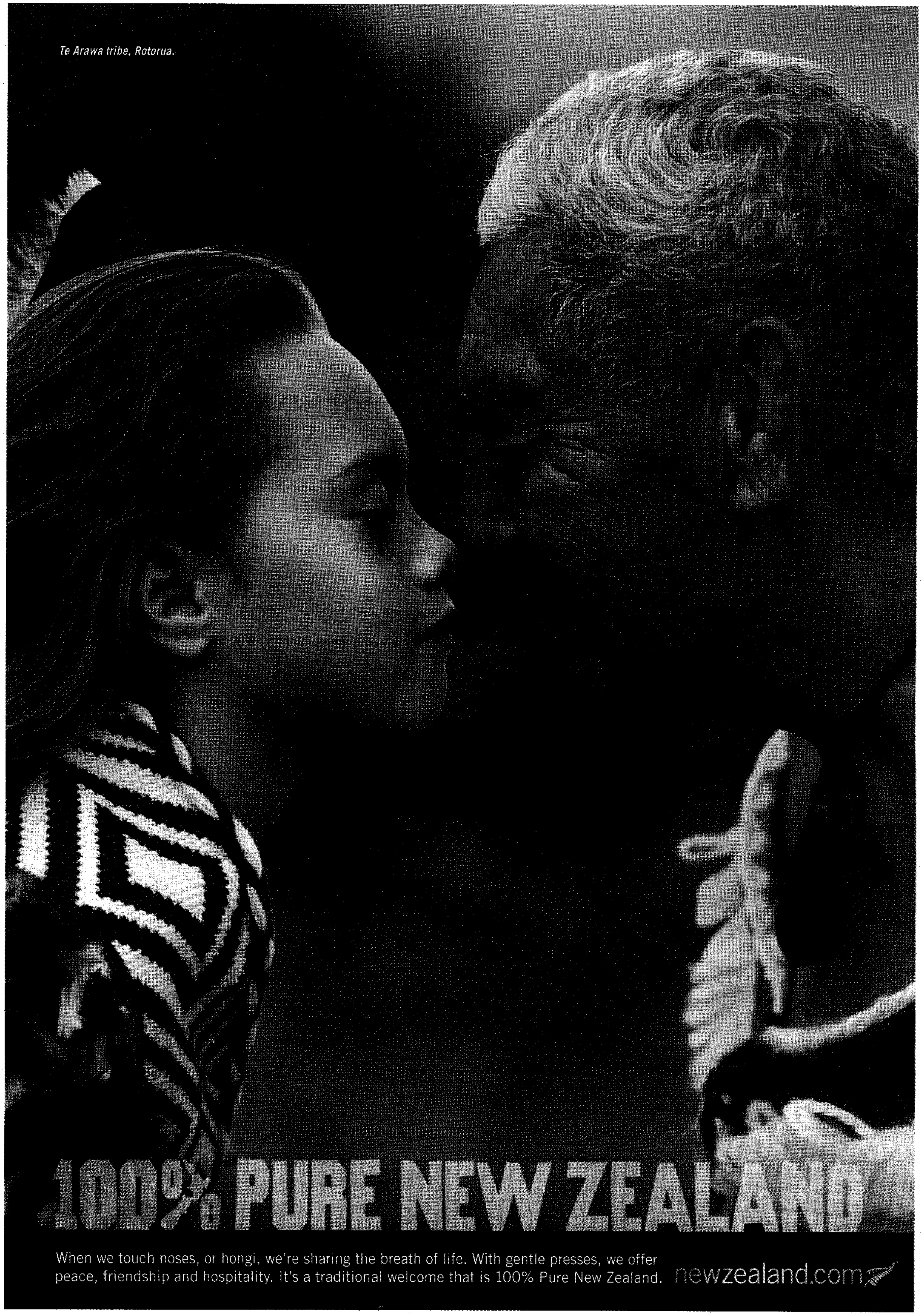
Chen's poetic style was simple and well metered; critics compared him to Housman and Hardy. He abandoned Christianity after childhood, but he had an almost religious feeling toward the distant past. In one early poem, the narrator gazes at a thousand-year-old stone engraving of a woman's face and notices "a cold, silent trace of a smile." In 1932, Chen entered graduate school at Yenching University, where he first studied religion, then ancient Chinese writing. The past drew closer; poetry drifted away. In "Song of Myself," Chen described the pain of creativity: "I crushed my chest and pulled out a string of songs." Later, he wrote, "Since I was seventeen, I have used metre to control myself. Everything I wrote could be measured by a string. . . . The chain was heavy on me, and in the slavery I learned to make fine words." By his early thirties, he had essentially stopped writing verse. He spent most of his time studying the inscriptions on ancient bronzes and oracle bones.

His wife, Zhao Luorui, was another prodigy. At twenty-five, she published the first Chinese translation of "The Waste Land." When the Japanese invaded Nanjing, in 1937, Chen and Zhao, along with many other Chinese academics, moved to the southwestern province of Yunnan. In 1944, they received a joint humanities fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, which paid for their journey to the United States. At the University of Chicago, Zhao wrote a dissertation about Henry James, while Chen hunted Chinese bronzes. The Wanderer earned his name, visiting museums and private collections in Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, New York, Boston, San Francisco, Honolulu, Toronto, Paris, London, and Oxford, among other cities. After visiting Stockholm, in 1947, Chen wrote a letter to the Rockefeller Foundation: "I was received by the Crown Prince in his castle to see his own collection and had the honour of talking and discussing with him for two hours."

Many ancient bronzes had been removed from China, especially during the chaotic early decades of the twentieth century, and few had been studied carefully. Chen planned to write a definitive book on the subject, complete



FROSTY, THE GOLDEN YEARS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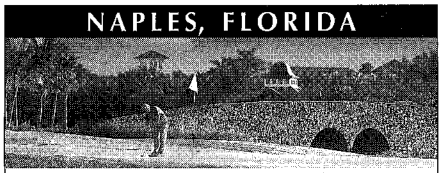

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with photographs and typology analysis. In 1947, he returned to China, having sent Harvard a draft of a huge manuscript. Editing would be conducted by mail. But the Communists came to power in 1949, and the Korean War started in 1950; communication ended between China and the United States.

Elinor Pearlstein, a curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, has in recent years tracked down Chen's letters from his time in the United States. Pearlstein provided me with information about Chen's travels, but she said that the Harvard draft of the book had disappeared. Apparently, the manuscript was given to a Harvard graduate student for editing, but the student committed suicide in 1967. The book was never published in the United States. (The Chinese volume I'd seen, with the anti-American title, was a poorly edited, pared-down version.)

In 1956, Chen published a groundbreaking book on oracle bones, "A Comprehensive Survey of the Divination Inscriptions from the Wastes of Yin." He included chapters on Shang grammar, astronomy, sacrifices, warfare, geography, and other basic topics. Every scholar of ancient Chinese I met said that it is a masterpiece.

But Chen's personality was often at odds with the politics of Communist China. "Chen had a poet's sensibility," Wang Shimin, an archeologist who was a friend of Chen's, told me. "He always said what he thought. He was *xinzhi koukuai*—he had a straight heart and a quick mouth."

## MAO'S ALPHABET

During the decades after the Opium War (1839-42), as China was occupied by foreign powers, its literary culture failed to prepare it for the transformation of modernity. In nineteenth-century Europe, archeology was dominated by the rising middle class, whose faith in change and material progress was reflected in descriptions of ancient ages—from stone to bronze and then to iron. But the Chinese interest in antiquity revolved around the written word, and traditional histories emphasized continuity rather than change. The Chinese were stuck with being Chinese.

Everything that was continuous—Confucianism, the imperial system, the characters—seemed outdated. All at once, the Chinese seemed to realize that they were writing differently from every other civilization on earth. In the nineteen-tens, Qian Xuantong, a prominent philologist, proposed that China should switch, in both spoken and written language, to Esperanto. Many of the twentieth century's leading scholars advocated abandoning the characters, believing them to be an impediment to both literacy and democracy. Lu Xun, who lived from 1881 to 1936, and was perhaps China's greatest modern author, advocated a shift to the Latin alphabet, which would enable people to write in their native tongues. He wrote (in characters, as he did until his death), "If we are to go on living, Chinese characters cannot. . . . The characters are a precious legacy handed down by our ancestors, I know. But we can sacrifice our inheritance or ourselves: which is it to be?"

In 1936, as the Communists were gaining power, Mao Zedong told an American journalist that alphabetization was inevitable. When Mao finally took control of China, in 1949, many expected the government to replace characters with Latin letters, as Vietnam had done earlier in the century. But in the summer of 1950 Mao handed down a surprise decision, calling for linguists to develop a "national-in-form" alphabet—a new writing system, whose letters would be distinctively Chinese.

John DeFrancis, a linguist at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, has studied this period, and he told me that the inspiration for Mao's order has always been a mystery. DeFrancis recommended that I speak with Zhou Youguang, a ninety-seven-year-old linguist who had worked on the writing-reform committee. DeFrancis, who is ninety-two, had not met with Zhou since the nineteen-eighties. "He said that he knew why Mao made that decision, but he wasn't free to talk about it," DeFrancis told me. He thought that perhaps Zhou's advanced age would make him more disposed to speak openly.

Zhou, along with two other surviving advocates for Chinese writing reform, lived in the first entryway of the dormitory at the State Language Commission, in Beijing. One afternoon, I started on the ground floor, with Yin Binyong, a friendly man of seventy-two who had the bushy eyebrows of a Taoist god. Yin told me that, after Mao's request for a national-in-form alphabet, the committee considered more than two thousand proposed writing systems. Some were derived entirely from Chinese; others used Latin or Cyrillic alphabets; a few combined fragments of Chinese characters with foreign letters. There were Chinese alphabets in Arabic. Yin remembered one system that employed numbers to convey Chinese sounds. In 1955, the committee narrowed the field to six alphabetic finalists: Latin, Cyrillic, and four completely new "Chinese" systems.

The story continued on the dormitory's fourth floor, where I visited eighty-year-old Wang Jun, who told me about character simplification. In 1956, Mao and other leaders concluded that the Chinese alphabets weren't yet usable. They sanctioned the Latin scheme, known as Pinyin, for use in early education and other special purposes, but not as a replacement script. And they decided to simplify a number of Chinese characters. This was described as an "initial reform stage": Mao, it seems, wanted more time to consider the options.

But writing reform soon became entangled in politics. In April of 1957, the Communist Party launched the Hundred Flowers campaign, during which intellectuals were invited to speak their minds, however critical. The response was overwhelming; thousands of Chinese commented publicly on all sorts of topics. Until then, Chen Mengjia had not been active in the writing-reform movement, but now he stepped in as a vigorous opponent of alphabetization and character simplification. His words were everywhere in the popular press that spring. In an article for the Guangming *Daily*, he wrote, "There must be objective reasons why we are still using these characters after more than three thousand years." In a published speech, he declared, "In the past, foreign devils said that the Chinese language was bad. Now more open scholars from the capitalist countries don't say so anymore. . . . I predict that we will still be using these characters for a number of years, and we should treat them as if they were alive. They are our cultural inheritance."

Then, after only five weeks, Mao abruptly terminated the Hundred Flowers campaign. By the end of the year, more than three hundred thousand intellectuals had been labelled Rightists. In the press, angry headlines appeared: "CRITICIZE CHEN MENGJIA"; "REFUTE THE RIGHTIST ELEMENT CHEN MENGJIA'S ABSURD THEORY." One article proclaimed, "The Rightist Element Chen Mengjia, a blade of grass that is poisonous . . . should never be allowed to root deep." Another described him as a "cow demon" with

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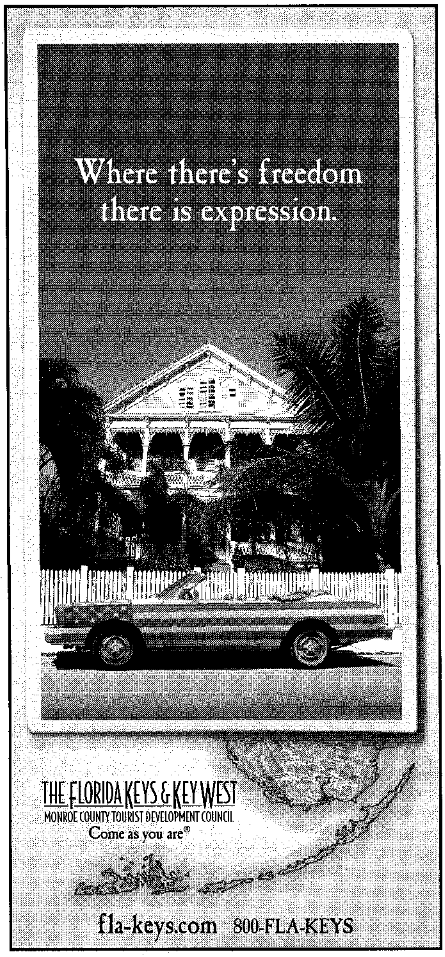

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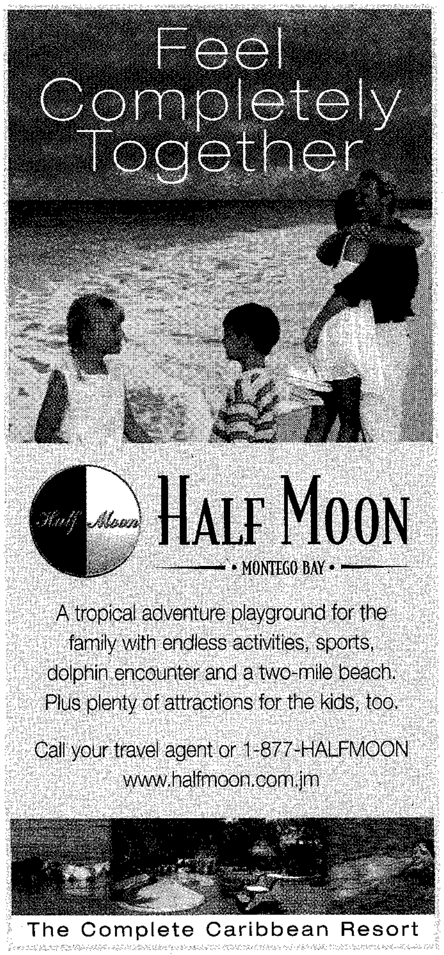

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an “evil scheme”: “Why do counterrevolutionaries of all eras hate simplified characters? Do they really want to return to antiquity?”

And from Chen—silence. He was sent to Henan province, the cradle of the Shang culture, to be reformed through manual labor. For the next five years, he was not allowed to publish anything under his own name.

It was dark by the time I arrived on the third floor of the State Language Commission dormitory. There I met Zhou Youguang, a frail, stooped man in slippers and sweatpants. I had to lean close and shout while he cupped a hand around his hearing aid. But his mind was sharp, and he still remembered some English; in the nineteen-forties, he had been a banker in New York. “I used to read your magazine in the Bankers' Club,” he said with a laugh.

I yelled at him, “It's changed since then!”

Like many patriotic young Chinese who had been living abroad, Zhou returned to China after the founding of the People's Republic. Sensing that there wasn't much of a future in Communist banking, Zhou switched to linguistics, a longtime hobby, and he became the main architect of Pinyin.

I asked Zhou what had happened to the four Chinese alphabets, and he told me that all records had apparently been destroyed. “It was easy to lose things like that during the Cultural Revolution,” he said.

The Cultural Revolution, which lasted from 1966 to 1976, represents the climax of China's disillusionment with its traditions. But, ironically, the upheaval helped protect the characters. When the chaos finally ended, the Chinese no longer had an appetite for radical cultural change, and both the public and the government rejected further attempts at writing reform. Today, almost nobody advocates alphabetization, and Zhou predicts that China won't give up its characters for at least another century, if ever. Even the simplification didn't get very far. It reduced the number of brushstrokes that make up some of the most commonly used characters, but the principles of the writing system remain the same. Essentially, it's the equivalent of converting an English word like “through” to “thru.” Zhou and others believe that simplification hasn't had a significant effect on improving literacy rates. Taiwan, Hong Kong, and many overseas Chinese communities don't use the simplified characters, and traditionalists despise them.

In hindsight, Mao's 1950 command doomed writing reform; without the search for a national-in-form alphabet, China likely would have adopted a Latin script before the Cultural Revolution. When I asked about Mao, Zhou said that the turning point was the Chairman's first state visit to the Soviet Union, in 1949. “Mao asked Stalin for advice about writing reform,” Zhou said. “Stalin told him, ‘You're a great country, and you should have your own Chinese form of writing. You shouldn't simply use the Latin alphabet.’ That's why Mao wanted a national-in-form alphabet.”

Chen Mengjia's brave defense of tradition had been unnecessary. In a sense, Joseph Stalin had already saved Chinese characters. I yelled out Chen's name, and Zhou smiled. “I liked him a lot,” Zhou said. “But, to be frank, his opposition had no impact on any of this.”

## THE MISPRINTED CHARACTER

Only one of Chen Mengjia's siblings is still alive—Chen Mengxiong, an eighty-five-year-old retired hydrogeologist. (In that generation of the Chen family, all the male given names included the character *meng*, or “dream.”) On a wintry December morning, I called on Mengxiong at his apartment in Beijing; his wife, a white-haired woman with a tight smile, brought us cups of tea.

Mengxiong seemed reluctant to talk—he said he wasn't feeling well. We looked at his only surviving photograph of the Chen clan, and he told me that his brother, after being labelled a Rightist, spent two or three years doing agricultural labor in Henan. “He had always been outgoing, but when he returned he didn't talk much,” Mengxiong said. He also mentioned that he had been upset when Zhao Jingxun, Mengjia's brother-in-law, accepted money from the Shanghai Museum for the antique furniture.

"Mengjia wanted it to be donated, not sold," the old man said angrily. "I never talked to Zhao after that."

I had brought a copy of Mengjia's 1966 letter to the museum curator, and I handed it to Mengxiong. He read it silently. "I've never seen this before," he said. "Where did you get it?"

Chinese tend to speak circuitously when confronted with a painful memory, and their stories go slack like string falling into a pile. But when they do decide to talk their directness can be overpowering. "That August, the Red Guards started their campaign against old things," Mengxiong said. "I was being struggled against. My oldest son was about nine, and I told him to sneak over to Mengjia's home and warn him. Mengjia had so many old paintings and books and things; I told him to throw them out or hide them. My son returned and said that everything was fine.

"But that night was the first time Mengjia tried to kill himself. He took sleeping pills, but he didn't die. They took him to the hospital. The next day, I went to his home, and there were Big Character posters on the door, criticizing Mengjia. I entered, and the Red Guards were already there. 'Good,' they said. 'You walked straight into the net.'

"Mengjia's wife was there, too, and the Guards seated her and me on chairs in the courtyard. They shaved off half our hair—that was called the Yin-Yang Head. Then they took off their leather belts and started beating us. First, they used the leather, then the buckle. I was wearing a white shirt, and it turned entirely red with blood. Once they let me go, I telephoned my work unit, and they sent people to take me home. On the way back, I saw my wife—not the same wife you've met, but my wife at the time. I told her to hurry home.

"Mengjia was in the hospital for a while, but they expelled him because of his background. After about a week, he killed himself. They had a live-in maid, and I think she found him. I couldn't go to his home, because I was being struggled against. There wasn't any funeral."

Mengxiong paused. I thought the story was over, but then the old man spoke again: "My wife had problems that year. She had a bad class background—her father was a famous calligrapher who had been in the Kuomintang administration. She was so frightened by the anti-Rightist campaigns in the nineteen-fifties that she became mentally ill. In 1966, not long after Mengjia died, her work unit asked her to copy revolutionary songs onto carbon paper. She wrote the lyrics 'Ten thousand years to Chairman Mao, ten thousand, ten thousand.' It was the same thing over and over. But she made a mistake on one word. She wrote *wu* instead of *wan*."

Mengxiong paused to inscribe two characters in my notebook: *wan sui*—ten thousand years. Then he wrote his wife's mistake: *wu sui*—no years. "She was immediately taken into custody," he said. "For about five years, she was held in Hebei province. For some of that time, she was kept in a pigsty. After

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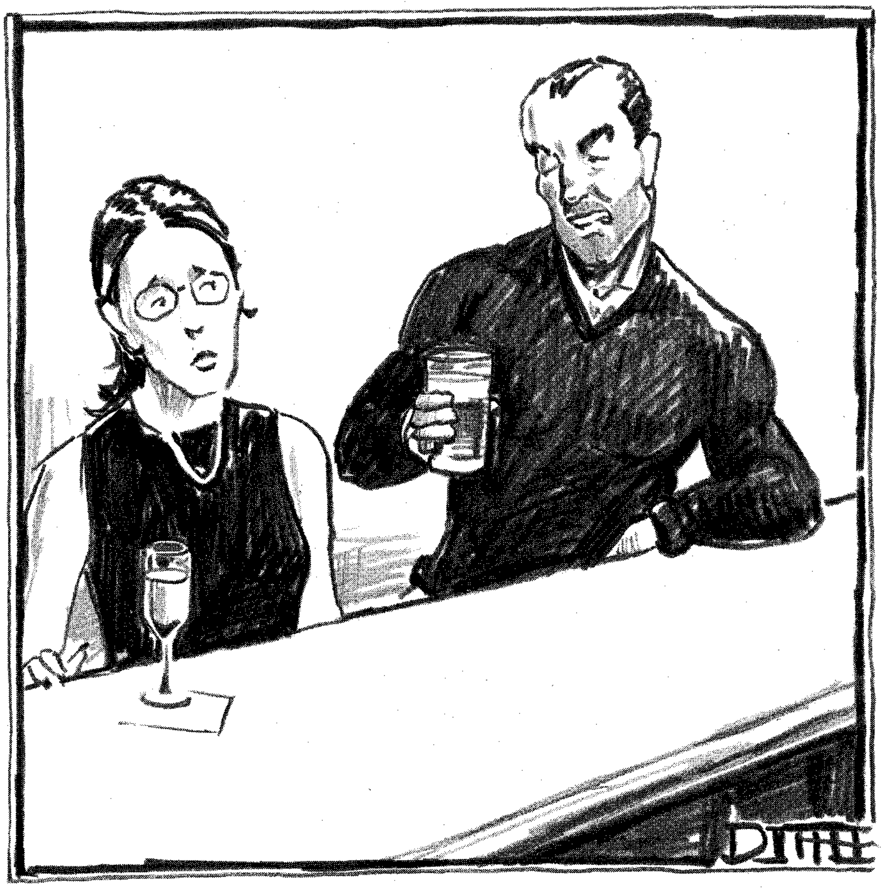

*"You know all those anonymous gifts to charities—that was me."*

• •

she came back, in the early nineteen-seventies, she was never the same. She died in 1982."

## THE WRITTEN WORLD

In the course of my research, I interviewed only one young person. I found a Chen Mengjia quotation on a Web site about Chinese writing; the site was edited by a thirty-five-year-old Hungarian named Imre Galambos, who is a curator at the British Library, in London. Galambos wrote his Ph.D. dissertation, at Berkeley, on Chinese-character development.

Traditionally, scholars have thought that characters were standardized during the reign of Qin Shihuang, who first unified the Chinese empire, in 221 B.C. But recently excavated documents suggest that Qin's impact may have been exaggerated. Galambos told me that the most important literary unification actually seems to have happened later, when the Han came to power and produced the first Chinese dictionary and the first official history. In order to validate their own cultural lineage, Han intellectuals tied the earlier so-called dynasties—the Xia, the Shang, the Zhou, and the Qin—into a single narrative. In fact, these were almost certainly distinct ethnic groups, with their own cultures, their own spoken languages, and their own methods of political control. But, after the Shang, they all shared a single writing system, and Han historians used this script to create a coherent story from the chaotic details of history, memory, and imagination. Mark Edward Lewis, a historian at Stanford, has described the ancient, continuous Chinese empire as based upon "an imaginary realm created within texts."

Galambos makes frequent visits to Beijing, and on one occasion when I met him he expanded on this theme. "There are certain cultures, like the Byzantine and the Chinese, in which the written documents create a world that is more significant than the real world," he told me. "I think the literary world is the link

*Chapter 21 Overcoming Obstacles*

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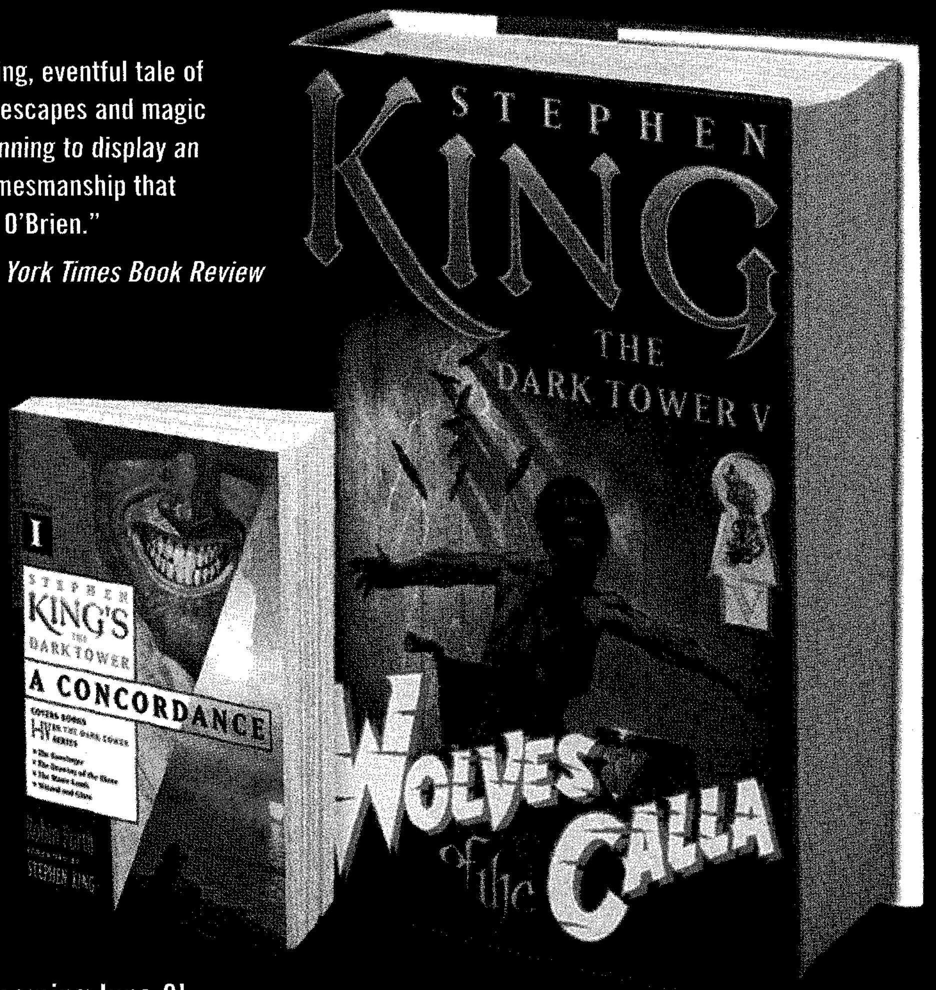
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in time that permits this thing we call 'Chinese history.' It's not the number of people or anything like that; it's the enormous written world that they produced. It's so big that it eats them up and everybody around them."

I asked Galambos what had inspired him to study Chinese. He replied that when he was a young man, in Communist Hungary, the mandatory military service was shortened by six months if you entered university. With this in mind, Galambos applied, but he missed all the deadlines except one—for a scholarship to study in China. That was fifteen years ago. "I got sucked into this whole Chineseness," he said.

One night, we met for a drink beside Houhai, a lake in central Beijing. It was a beautiful autumn evening; the lights shone red and yellow on the water. Galambos talked about the importance of writing in China, and then he pointed at me. "That's why the Chinese worry about you, the correspondent," he said. "For the West, whatever you create is China. If you write about us sitting here in Houhai, people will think, Wow, China's a really cool place. That's how the place is formed in their minds. But it might have very little to do with reality."

## THE POEM

Chen Mengjia's wife survived him by thirty-two years. After the Cultural Revolution—the criticisms, the beatings, the head-shaving—Zhao Luorui developed schizophrenia, but she recovered enough to teach and write again. In the nineteen-eighties, she translated the first complete Chinese edition of "Leaves of Grass." In 1990, she returned to lecture at her alma mater, the University of Chicago; the following year, she received the university's Distinguished Achievement Award. She died in 1998.

Not long ago, I met one of Zhao's Chicago classmates, Wu Ningkun; he was eighty-three. In 1951, at Zhao's invitation, Wu abandoned his Ph.D. dissertation on T. S. Eliot in order to return to China and teach. Wu was imprisoned in 1958, after being labelled a Rightist. For more than two decades, he lived either in jail or in exile in the countryside. He returned to the United States in 1990, eventually settling in Reston, Virginia, with his wife, Li Yikai. In 1993, he published, in English, a memoir about Communist China entitled "A Single Tear."

When I visited Wu's apartment, he recalled that, after his imprisonment, he didn't see Zhao again until 1980. "We didn't even mention Mengjia's name," Wu said softly. "That would have been one of the hardest things for me to say—if I had said I was sorry. I knew how futile and meaningless those words were. She didn't cry. She was very strong-willed."

Wu told me that during his years in prison he had often gained strength by remembering verse. "I used to think of Du Fu, Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas," he said. "Do you know the one Dylan Thomas wrote when his father was dying? That line—'twisting on racks.' From 'And Death Shall Have No Dominion.' You know, I heard Dylan Thomas recite his poems in Chicago. It was very touching."

I asked Wu if he had spoken with Thomas.

"No, I was just in the audience," Wu said. "And he was more than half drunk. He was suffering—life was such a burden to him, I suppose."

In the library of Peking University, a friend helped me find a two-volume Chinese version of "Leaves of Grass." The title page prominently listed the translator's name: Zhao Luorui.

The book had been published in 1991, and three years later Kenneth M. Price, an American Whitman scholar, visited Zhao in Beijing. Their conversation was published in the *Walt Whitman Quarterly*. In the interview, Price asked Zhao how she had translated the first stanza of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," in which a long sentence builds for twenty-two lines before the subject and verb appear—a structure that would be awkward in Chinese. Zhao answered, "There is no way of keeping the sentence together as one sentence because I must say that, though I want to be faithful, I also want my Chinese to be fluent."

I reread Whitman's original, then picked up the Chinese volume. Using a dictionary for the difficult characters, I did my best to bring Zhao's last three lines back into English:

> I, the singer of painful and joyous songs,
> uniting this life and the next,
> Receiving all hints, making use of them
> all, but at full speed leaping over
> everything,
> Sing a reminiscence. ♦

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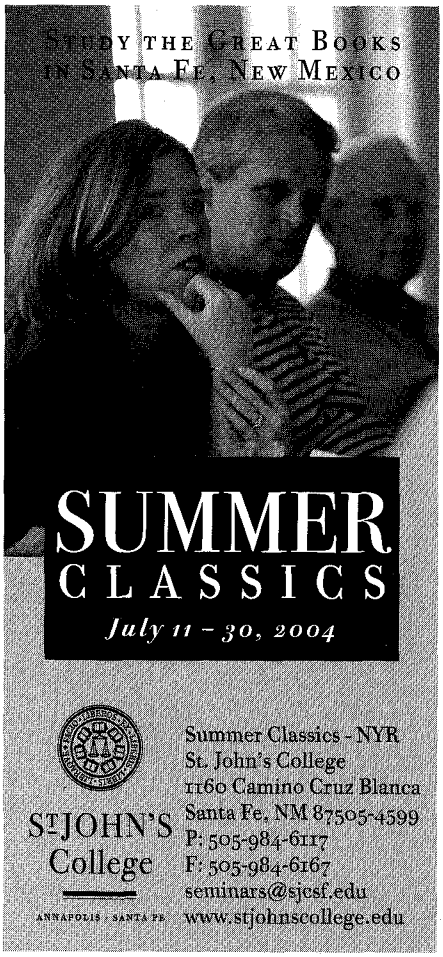

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PROFILES

# THE POPULIST

*Michael Moore can make you cry.*

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

Michael Moore is a comedian and a populist, and he is well suited to both missions. What sort of comedian would he be, after all, without the Big Mac belly, without the famous duck waddle? A clever one, perhaps, a witty one who keeps his cool, but not an icon. Not Michael Moore. His bulk is essential, as he knows—he's always referring to it. "You don't want this rolling around in the White House," he says, opening his arms and exposing his stomach, when someone suggests—as people frequently do—that he run for President. Al Franken and Jon Stewart say funny things, but Moore *is* funny, in quite a different way. Michael Moore, the fat man, is the big guy in his baseball cap, the way Charlie Chaplin was the little tramp in his bowler (although in Chaplin's day the plutocrat was fat and the poor man was tiny). Likewise, what sort of populist would Moore be without the sloppy clothes? He understands his costume is crucial. He wore a tuxedo to receive an Emmy for his show "TV Nation," but he kept on his baseball cap.

Comedy and populism combine in Moore to produce a political force of especial potency, ridicule knocking down what anger leaves upright. They work together beautifully because they follow the same laws. The populist champions the man who works with his hands, with real stuff, against the one who works with his head. Populists are not revolutionaries—even left-wing ones are conservative, in the literal sense of the word. Revolution is an abstraction, an intellectual idea; populists want to return to roots, to basic values, to solid things—to the way things were before intellectuals and financiers corrupted them. Comedy, too, is on the side of the body and against the soul. It mocks hubris, affectation, and hypocrisy, but it also mocks originality, utopianism, and earnestness. It takes the point of view that, in the end, we are just bodies, eating, defecating, and copulating, and everything else is pretentious rubbish.

Moore has been a hero to comedians for fifteen years, ever since "Roger & Me"—his brilliant comic documentary

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON

*Moore in New York, January 22, 2004. "You can't debate satire," he says. "Either you get it or you don't."*

about the decline of Flint, Michigan, the auto town where he grew up—came out, in 1989. Who could forget the bunny lady, fallen on hard times and selling rabbits for "pets or meat"? Or all the dumb, cheerful people—Miss Michigan; Anita Bryant—saying dumb, cheerful things in the face of Flint's disaster? Most affecting of all was Moore himself, shot often from the back, shuffling, feet splayed, to knock on doors, or from the side, trying not to laugh when somebody said something amazing, and talking through the film with his Michigan accent and his voice too affectionate to be sarcastic, too forceful to be merely funny. But in the past three years Moore has become a political hero as well. People revere him. After he gave a speech at last year's Oscars denouncing President Bush and the Iraq war, he received many letters from soldiers thanking him for opening their eyes to the lies of the government and for confirming their view that they are fighting for a country where dissent is embraced. "Mr. Moore, you are America," one wrote. One fan said that she had a spare ticket to a recent sold-out Moore talk in California, which she could have hawked for a fortune, but she didn't, because making a profit from a Michael Moore event just wouldn't be right. "Michael's not only funny—he can make you cry," Danny Goldberg, the chairman of Artemis Records and a friend of Moore's, says. "He's very cognizant of the broadest possible audience, and emotion is vital if you're going to have a politics that speaks to most people. Al Franken's so clever, and Jon Stewart's so good at what he does, but Michael has an ability to touch people's hearts that neither of them has. He's like a great blues singer."

Moore is of the left, but it is also important to him that he is mainstream. He wants to change things, and he knows that to do so he must prove to his followers that they are the majority. He always emphasizes that most Americans agree with him on matters like gay rights, abortion rights, the environment, and the war in Iraq, whether or not they call themselves liberals. He tells people to vote. He tells them to take over their local Democratic Party—so few people go to the meetings, he says, that if you show up with fifteen friends you can institute a Green agenda without much opposition. He asks people to spend a weekend next October in one of the congressional districts where the race promises to be close, handing out flyers. Last month, he endorsed Wesley Clark, ignoring howls of protest from pacifist fans, and despite having compared the bombing of Kosovo, which Clark commanded, to the shootings at Columbine High School, in Colorado. It was a pragmatic decision—a reaction, perhaps, to the consequences of his support for Ralph Nader in 2000. "We'll get more people with that attitude than the attitude of 'Oh, Clark voted for Reagan,' " Moore says, sitting in his office in midtown Manhattan. "Aarrgggh! It's like, yeah? What's your point? So did the majority of Americans. What are you saying to them—'Don't come in our tent'?"

His influence is extraordinary. His third book, "Stupid White Men" (2001), a diatribe against rich people, white people, dumb people, men, Israel, and North Korea, among other things, was on the *Times* best-seller list for fifty-nine weeks and sold more than four million copies worldwide. "Dude, Where's My Country?" (2003), his fourth book, a diatribe against rich people, white people, and the Iraq war, among other things, started out at No. 1. His first book, "Downsize This!" (1996), was also a best-seller. He is even more popular in Europe than he is here. Recently, "Dude, Where's My Country?" was No. 1 on the German best-seller list, at the same time that "Stupid White Men" was No. 2 and "Downsize This!" was No. 6. Moore's TV shows of the mid- and late nineties, "TV Nation" and "The Awful Truth," went off the air after a couple of seasons, and "Canadian Bacon," his second movie and only attempt at fiction, was not a success; but "Bowling for Columbine" (2002), his fourth film, earned more than twenty-one million dollars at the box office in the U.S. (tripling the previous record for a documentary) and won the Best Feature Documentary Academy Award.

Everywhere Moore went on a recent fifty-eight-city book tour through America and Europe, thousands of people showed up to see him. Nine thousand in London. Eight thousand in both Berkeley and Denver. Six thousand in Ypsilanti. Four thousand in Berlin. Ten thousand in Portland, Oregon. Sometimes thousands would show up without tickets and simply stand outside. He entered and left the stage to standing ovations.

On a sunny Wednesday in November, the fourth day of his European book tour, Moore did a lunchtime show in Liverpool, at the Everyman and Playhouse. He loped onto the stage and waved. He opened with a few jokes about the Prince Charles sex scandal that had broken the week before. The audience laughed raucously. "I've always asked everyone to send me to Liverpool and they've always said no," he said. "Why? They're afraid of the city, aren't they? Because at the end of this book reading you might actually go out on the street and tear something down. Woo-hoo!" He told them that Americans of Irish origin had a special feeling for Liverpool, because their ancestors—Moore's own great-grandmother among them—had come through the city on their way to America.

"We never left, Mike," a man in the balcony called out. "We starved here."

"You're just bringing up old history," Moore ribbed.

But the man in the balcony didn't want to joke about it. "Five thousand Irish people were buried in paupers' graves in this city through typhus," he called down. "This city has seen misery untold."

"Well, I wasn't trying to sugarcoat history. I was just happy that my great-grandmother was able to find a place. Don't be upset at her for leaving you guys behind." The audience laughed. Although Moore is primarily a filmmaker and writer, used to controlling his environment, he is an extremely talented live performer, exquisitely sensitive to his audience's mood and response. The harshness of his comedy, the proportion of comedy to political anger, the flattery or mockery of the audience, the number and type of swearwords he uses—all are adjusted second by second while he's onstage.

"Go back to talking about America," a man in the stalls called out. "You're on safe ground there."

"Who's the beneficiary of this war?" Moore asked the audience a few minutes later. "Halliburton. . . . Has anyone else benefitted?"

"Israel!" several voices in the crowd cried out.

"It's all part of the same ball of wax, right?" Moore said. "The oil companies, Israel, Halliburton. I would just like to make a modest proposal: from now on, for every Brit or American kid that's killed in this war, I would like Halliburton to slay one mid-level executive." The audience applauded wildly. Before they'd stopped laughing, Moore seized the moment.

"I'd like to take a couple minutes here to read the names of the fifty-three dead Brits," he said. "Stephen Allbutt, dead. Luke Allsopp, dead. Russell Aston, dead." He continued on down the list until the end. "I'd like to pause for a moment to honor them and offer our apologies to them and to their families for their senseless death.

"Now that people know they've been lied to, what's happened? Bush's approval ratings have gone from eighty per cent to forty-eight per cent in just a few months. My new book has been No. 1 since the day it came out. Let me just read you one line from the new book so you understand what's No. 1 in America: 'These bastards who run our country are a bunch of conniving, thieving, smug pricks who need to be brought down and removed and replaced with a whole new system that we control!' " The audience clapped again, and Moore called for questions.

"Us working-class people are being taught in schools to accept a middle-class perspective," an old man in the balcony said. "We're brainwashed. Thank God we've got working-class people like you, if you are working class."

"Shut up," said a bored voice from the crowd.

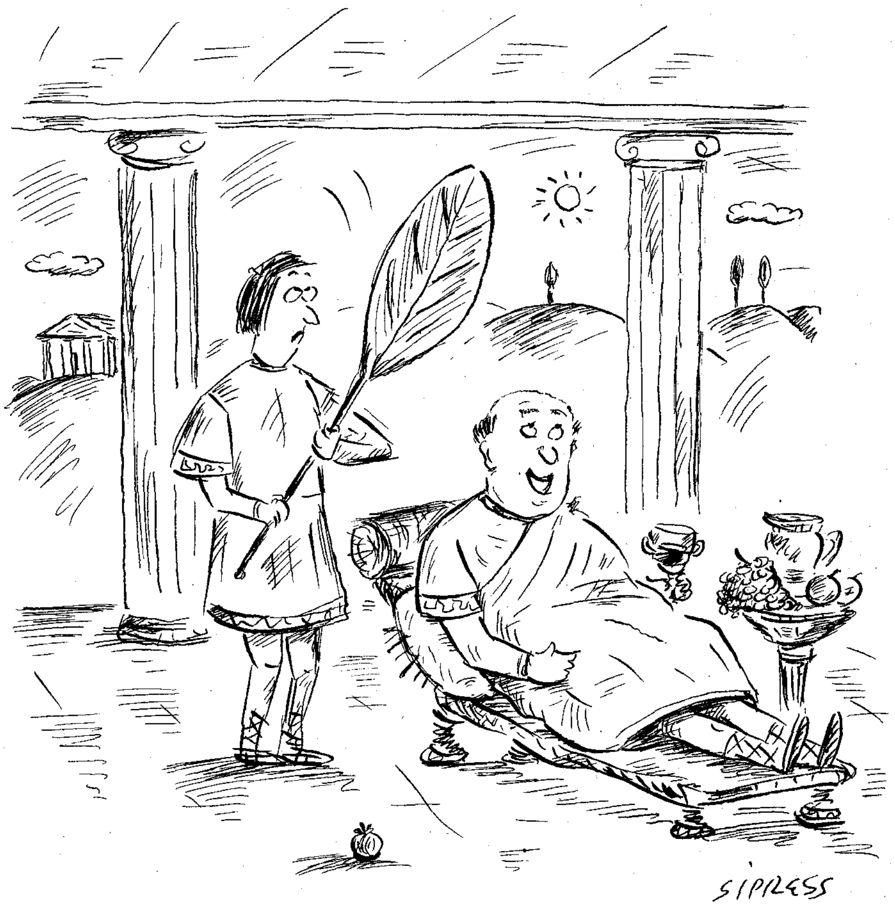
"You're a working-class traitor!" the old man shouted back angrily, and other people joined in shouting abuse to one man or the other. The audience was rowdy and as interested in itself as it was in the performance. Moore watched the shouting for a moment.

"I come from a working-class family," he said when the noise died down. "My dad was an autoworker, my mom was a clerk. Until I was thirty-five, I never made more than fifteen thousand dollars a year. I still believe the lessons I learned when I was raised in a Roman Catholic household. Like, it's harder for a rich man to get into Heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle."

Moore's relatives emigrated from Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century to work on the railroad or as farmers or in the factories in Pontiac and Flint. His father's parents both worked at General Motors; his mother's father was a country doctor near Flint. Moore is the oldest of three children: his sister Anne is a lawyer; his sister Veronica teaches early-childhood education. As a child in the sixties (he was born in 1954), he was sent to Catholic school, where he was a good, obedient student. After eighth grade, he enrolled in a seminary: he admired the Berrigan brothers and thought that the priesthood was the way to effect social change. This resolve lasted only through his first year, though, after the Detroit Tigers made it to the World Series for the first time in Moore's life and the seminary wouldn't allow him to watch the games. He discovered girls in band practice (the seminary wasn't big enough to have a band of its own), and by tenth grade he had reëntered the secular world.

In high school, he joined the debate team. He gained an Eagle Scout award for putting together a slide show about the worst polluters in his town. He wrote a school play in which Christ came down from the Cross but was nailed up again by a group of characters who were obviously modelled on certain local people. When he was seventeen, he saw "A Clockwork Orange," and it is still his favorite film; Stanley Kubrick is his favorite filmmaker. His senior year, he was voted class clown, and soon after he turned eighteen he got elected to the school board; his platform was "Fire the principal," and, a few months later, the principal was forced to resign. He attended the local campus of the University of Michigan for a year; he claims that he quit one morning because he couldn't find a parking space. He signed up to work on the assembly line like his father, but he called in sick the first day and never went back.

After he dropped out of college, Moore became a notorious figure in



*"The word 'slave' is so degrading. Why don't we call you 'intern.' "*

*"If you like, we can donate ten per cent of your total purchase price to our Get Drunk After Work Employee Fund."*

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Flint. He was a hippie in those days, with long hair that he wore loose. He wore banged-up jeans and, later, big bifocals. He had a weekly radio show that aired on Sunday mornings called "Radio Free Flint." He ran a film series. He was always turning up on the evening news, leading a rally or an antinuclear protest or talking into the camera, criticizing the police. He started a crisis center for teen-agers, and that somehow mutated into a small alternative newspaper called the Flint *Voice*. He hadn't had any money to start a paper, but he persuaded the folksinger Harry Chapin to give a series of benefit concerts for it. It got a little advertising, too—the local vegetarian restaurant, the head shop. Moore would hold editorial meetings in people's houses, and he made a point of always inviting one contributor, Ben Hamper, who worked on the assembly line at General Motors. Hamper found the meetings dull. He wasn't allowed to smoke indoors. There was wine rather than beer or liquor (Moore rarely drinks), and bad hippie music (Moore loved Jackson Browne and Joan Baez). They'd take place on a street full of neatly mowed lawns, and Hamper felt that if the person with the house really wanted to be radical he could begin with the lawn. "It was very dainty," Hamper says.

After a while, the *Voice* became known on the left, particularly among editors of similar papers in other cities. Moore himself held many of those other papers in contempt, feeling that they had abandoned their alternative roots in favor of silly, yuppie articles rating tanning salons and ice cream. In 1980, the *Voice* ran a story about a motel that refused to hire black people or give them rooms after eight o'clock at night. Another article revealed that the mayor was using federally paid workers to go door to door campaigning for him. When the mayor heard about the story, he obtained a warrant and ordered the Flint police to seize the printing plates right off the press; Moore went to court and got the seizure reversed, and the incident became national news. The paper also ran articles about the wider world; Moore was interested in the usual lefty international issues of the time. He was involved in the anti-apartheid campaign at the University of Michigan. He travelled to Nicaragua in 1983 to check out the Sandinistas, and to Israel in 1988 to witness the first intifada. There was also comic relief. Each year during deer-hunting season, around a million hunters tromped into the Michigan woods, many of them drunk, and each year about ten people died; Moore ran a clip-and-save ad in the paper that placed a photo of a man, titled "Man," next to a photo of a deer, titled "Deer," and asked that readers study the two carefully before setting out.

In 1982, Moore started seeing Kathleen Glynn, whom he later married. She was Irish Catholic, too; she had curly red hair, freckles, and a pointy chin. She had married when she was twenty-two and had a baby, Natalie, but soon afterward she realized she'd made a mistake about her husband, and around that time she happened to run into Moore at the Flint *Voice* office. They talked about their mutual love of Bruce Springsteen. They loved Springsteen so much that sometimes they would go to his concerts even though neither of them had a ticket. "We just wanted to stand outside and hear whatever we could through the walls," she says. "Just go soak up the karma." Glynn's parents were poorer than Moore's; they couldn't afford to keep their six kids in Catholic school. Her whole family worked for General Motors—both maternal grandparents, her paternal grandfather, and all eight of his children. Glynn had started her own graphic-design business and opened a gallery, but neither she nor Moore thought about the future, or of a life outside Flint. "We didn't have much ambition," Glynn says of those days. "There wasn't talk of dreams. Maybe it was 'Wouldn't it be cool to own a movie theatre? Yeah, that's a cool idea.' Things just kind of happened."

Back in the Playhouse, the questions continued.

"The only thing we could do in any way to stop this happening is just to stop working," a middle-aged man in the balcony suggested, talking about the war. "Then they'll have no money to fund guns."

This was, in fact, the logical extension of a point that Moore makes often, that American and British citizens are responsible for the war because it is being funded by taxes; but Moore seemed taken aback by such a radical notion. A general strike! It was an idea from the twenties. The working class of Liverpool hadn't changed in eighty years. For

Moore, it was strange and wonderful to stumble across a living specimen of what, in America, seemed irrevocably past—like spotting a pterodactyl in the sky! The days of the sitdown strikes, Flint in the thirties, loom very large for Moore. To him, they represent everything that America should be about—solidarity, working-class consciousness, unselfishness, a correct understanding of the greater good. It is important to him that he can claim one relative—Laverne, his uncle by marriage—who took part in them. But the sitdown strikes succeeded too well.

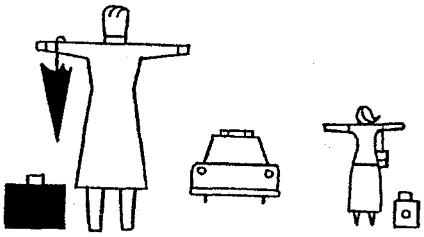
As a result of the strikes, and the union negotiations that took place over the subsequent decades, autoworkers became middle class. By the time Moore was growing up, his father, as a member of the United Auto Workers, was entitled to free medical care, free dental care, and four weeks of paid vacation. If he needed legal help for any civil matter, the union provided a lawyer free. He had two cars and owned his home outright. He lived not in the city of Flint itself but in Davison, a white middle-class community a few miles away. His family took nice vacations and he sent his three children to college. Moore's father didn't particularly like his work at the plant, but it paid well and could be relied upon—something he appreciated, having grown up in the Depression. He worked the first shift, from six until two, then played golf at the public course—paid for by families whose money came from General Motors—down the street from the factory. He retired with a full pension after thirty-three years, at the age of fifty-three, whereupon he took it easy and did volunteer work at the church.

The trouble was that the workers who had become middle class began thinking middle class. "People started to believe that the factory would always be there, that the health benefits would always be there, the four weeks' paid vacation," Moore says. "So when the company started taking them away people were, like, 'Whoa, what's going on?' Well, when was the last union meeting you went to? 'Never been to a union meeting.' Do you vote in every election? 'I try to.' Everybody got their two cars, their house in the suburbs, their snowmobile, their cabin up north, and decided to check out from job No. 1, which is being a citizen of the United States of America."

The autoworkers played golf like their bosses and forgot that those bosses did not have their best interests at heart. "That's the sad change that took place," Moore says. "I mean, look at all these union people who voted for Reagan. They got sucked into this Horatio Alger thing—you know, let's not be too critical of these tax breaks for the rich because we might be rich someday. All these guys back in the shop, they all had a scheme, they had an idea, they had an invention. But then they started doing things like buying houses in the inner city where you can get them really cheap, renovate them, and be landlords. I can't tell you how many guys I know in the shop that have done that. And it's, like, wait a minute, you're not supposed to be a landlord! You're the worker! We're not supposed to be these people who are jacking up rents and being the Man."

It's odd that Moore gets so angry on the subject of autoworkers becoming landlords, because he is constantly irritated by people asking him how he can continue to represent the working class now that he has so much money. Moore believes that only rich people ask him this question. Working-class people back home in Flint don't consider his money an issue, he says; they just thump him on the back and congratulate him. After all, they'd like to be rich, too. This is the good side of the Horatio Alger myth: the generosity and hopefulness that it spawns; its power to neutralize resentment. "It's part of what I do like about the American dream," Moore says. "The working class in Ireland or Britain is very different. If you put yourself on camera, they would immediately shoot you down, like, 'Who the hell do you think you are?' "

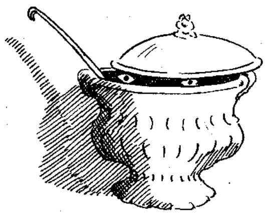
When Moore gets annoyed by people griping about his money—his nice apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the private school that his daughter attended—he is not being hypocritical. That sort of pious, ascetic griping is how the left lost the mainstream in the eighties, he believes: it became a bunch of whinging, dowdy, priggish depressives eating boiled vegetables in some dismal ethnic restaurant—who would want to join *that* party? He wants to bring back to the left a sense that pleasure is O.K., that self-indulgence isn't always evil.



He believes in sacrifice: when he got his first large check for "Roger & Me," he set up a foundation that funds first-time filmmakers, battered-women's shelters, and soup kitchens, among other things. But he doesn't believe in flagellation. "It would have been O.K. not to make that Oscar speech," he says. "It's O.K. to accept the Oscar and be filled with joy and go out and have a good time. Too many people on the left have failed to do that. When they accomplish something good, the attitude is, 'We've gotta go on to the next thing.' If you do that all the time, you're gonna end up a miserable person and lead an unhappy life. You're a human being, first and foremost—you're not a cause."

The day after Moore appeared in Liverpool, he was to address a group in the student union at Cambridge. The room was a high-ceilinged Victorian Gothic hall with dark wooden beams, a gallery ornamented with coats of arms, and stained-glass windows. Moore, the American, looked fittingly, theatrically, out of place.

"You're stuck with being connected to this country of mine, which is known for bringing sadness and misery to places around the globe," he told the students. "How's that feel? See, I actually hold Blair more responsible for this than Bush, because Bush is an idiot. . . . I understand why the American public was fooled by the lies: we live in a system of enforced ignorance. The way the media works, the way our education system works, it's all about keeping us stupid. . . . *National Geographic* did a survey of young Americans your age, eighteen to twenty-four. Eighty-seven per cent couldn't find Iraq on the map. Shouldn't it be Rule No. 1 that if you're going to invade a country you should at least know where the country is? Sixty-three per cent could not find England on the map. I mean, folks, really. I think you should say to Mr. Blair, 'Why are you kissing our ass if we don't even know where the fuck you are?' . . . But here's the best number from that survey: eleven per cent could not find the United States on the globe." The students hooted in disbelief. "When you have a country that is this *disoriented*," Moore said, raising his voice and moving seamlessly into seriousness, "it's extremely easy to manipulate people with lies and fear, and that's how Bush has gotten away with it. That's our excuse. What's yours?"



He'd been talking for about twenty minutes when his sister Anne came in carrying several very large plastic bags, each containing many small packets of Doritos. "I figured you guys had been sitting here for an hour and a half," he said (he had shown up nearly two hours late), "so we stopped on the way and got you lunch. It's kind of an American-style lunch—I hope you don't mind." He started throwing the packets around the room to the students, who grabbed them. "Sorry, you'll have to share," he said. "But it's still your way, right, to share? You don't want to turn into us—a society where the ethic is me me me me me me me, fuck you."

Moore wishes that America would become more like other, gentler countries—"a little bit of Norway, a little bit of Costa Rica," as he puts it. He believes that the government should regulate companies to prevent them from making an excessive profit. If a company wants to move a factory abroad after American workers have made it profitable, he believes that the company should have to pay reparations to its former employees, just as a husband whose wife has put him through medical school is obliged to pay alimony if he leaves her. (He is not an old-style populist buy-American type, however; he thinks that foreign competition has been used as a bogeyman to distract Americans from corporate bad behavior. In Flint, he drove a Honda.) Moore would set the top tax rate, for those making more than half a million dollars a year, at fifty to sixty per cent; those making more than two hundred thousand a year would pay forty per cent. But he knows that, when it comes to taxes, he is really not mainstream. Free stuff like rights is easy to dole out, but money is different. "Liberals don't really have the conviction in their gut to see that things are going to change," he says. "They'd like 'em to change. They're not bigots. But if it really meant having to share the pie, that's probably going too far for a lot of people who call themselves liberals." He pauses. "I guess I'm really talking about class. It's the thing we dance around, isn't it? I'm really talking about moneyed liberals as opposed to unmoneyed liberals." This is why he's always emphasizing his belief that a society better taken care of is a safer society with less crime.

A male student stood up in the back of the room to ask a question. "You talk about the culture of fear in 'Bowling for Columbine,'" he said, "so why do you have so much security?"

"Who said that I have so much security?" Moore said, sounding tense.

"Well, you have actually quite a lot," the student said.

An older man sitting in the front row pointed to three men in the room. The men, who were standing in identical at-ease positions with their hands clasped and their legs apart, were dressed in uniforms consisting of khakis, white shirts, and navy blazers. Each had a small company badge on his lapel and a curly wire coming out of his ear. "They assume that all these men are your bodyguards," the older man said.

"Why are they assuming that?" Moore asked. "Because they're black?"

There was a chorus of low oohs in the room, as though to indicate that this was a dirty blow; but then students started clapping, as though to congratulate Moore for scoring a point.

"I'm not in any jeopardy," Moore told the student who had asked the question. "Don't worry about me." He pointed at his entourage: "One's my Pilates instructor, one's my yoga instructor, that's my sister Anne, she's my bodyguard." People laughed. Having won the laugh, he started talking in a serious tone again. "I have somebody travelling with me who's working on my next movie," he told the student. "So that's what's up."

In "Bowling for Columbine," one of Moore's central points is that America is a violent society because Americans are fearful. He begins investigating why the country is violent in the usual way, by focussing on the easy availability of guns and bullets, but later he points out that Canadians are just as gun-crazy as Americans yet don't seem to shoot each other nearly so often. He decides that Canadians are less violent because they are taken care of by the state, and because they are not continually advised by the media to be anxious about criminals and all manner of other things—Y2K breakdowns, razor blades in Halloween apples, killer bees. In a cartoon (in both senses) potted history of America, Moore attributes to fearfulness every shameful aspect of America's past, from the killing of Indians to slavery and the Klan.

It is because Moore makes such a forceful argument about the perniciousness of fear that the sight of him surrounded by security in a room full of students was so jarring. For the three uniformed men travelling with Moore were, of course, security guards—as Moore did not deny when asked later on (though they also functioned as assistants). They had been hired by Moore's publisher to protect him on the tour, from Gavin de Becker & Associates, an agency based in Los Angeles. (Gavin de Becker, ironically, has developed a threat-assessment system called Mosaic that, in the fearful atmosphere after Columbine, has been popular with high-school administrators: it involves investigating certain students and evaluating their potential to be violent.) "Look, those who are opposite to me politically are filled with a lot of anger and violence, in a way that our side is not," Moore says. "A reactionary conservative right-winger is filled with a sense of entitlement that can be backed up by force. Because there is hate mail, it all becomes about liability issues. Nobody wants it on their hands if something happens."

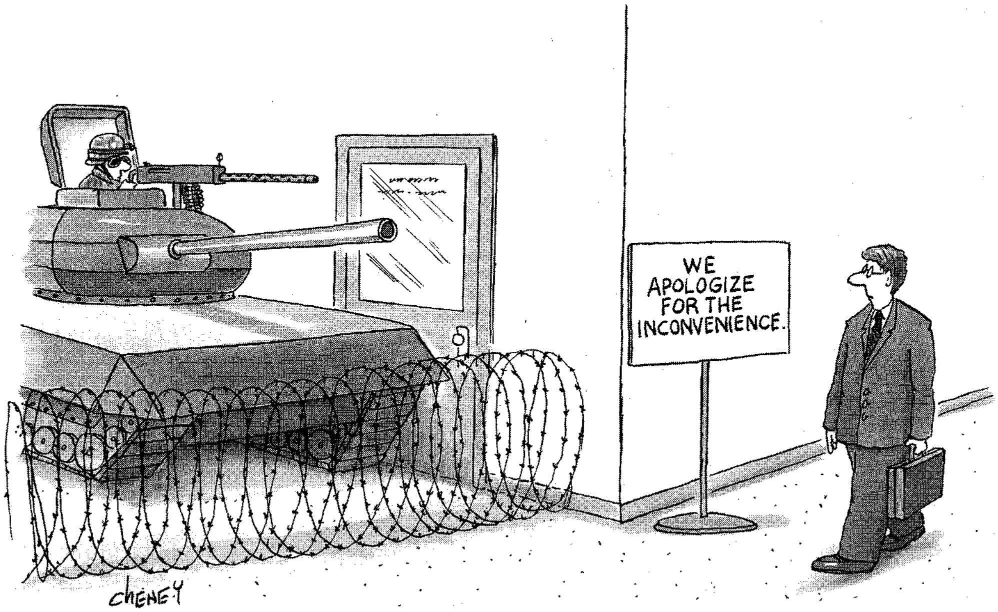
It's true that Moore receives hate mail, and there are Web sites devoted to bringing him down (moorewatch.com, bowlingfortruth.com, moorelies.com). But all polarizing political figures get hate mail—it doesn't mean they're in danger. Moore seems to feel, more than most, that people are out to get him and that there are few people he can trust, outside his family. Onstage at the Roundhouse in London in 2002, he criticized the security there so bitterly that, at the last performance, the staff refused to open the theatre's doors until he apologized. (During the same series of performances, he suggested that passengers on the 9/11 planes were too wimpy to resist because they were white.) Moore can be quite paranoid, always imagining conspiracies against him. "If you get into the siege mentality that he has, which is, I'm in the center of capitalist horrible America here, trying to sneak a piece of completely subversive, life-changing, revolutionary television onto the network owned by General Electric and Fox that's going to touch the people of this country and make them take up their torches and pitchforks—well, who can I trust in this battle?" a person who worked for him on "TV Nation" says. "He really believes that he's taking on gigantic powers. Verbal sniping only proves how dangerous his work is, in his mind."

Perhaps it was because of this siege mentality that, when the student asked Moore about his bodyguards, Moore seemed momentarily to panic—and his instinctive response was to attack, and then to say something just short of a lie, delivered in the form of a joke. This last strategy is one he adopts frequently. A few months ago, the TV host and former Florida congressman Joe Scarborough accused Moore of distorting facts, and on the American leg of his book tour Moore took revenge by telling audiences about a little-known incident: a female aide had been found dead in Scarborough's district office with a mark indicating a hard blow to the head. He told them that he'd done a little research on the medical examiner who ruled out foul play, and discovered that he had been fired from his previous position for mishandling a similar case. Of course, he was just kidding around, Moore said. He didn't really think that Scarborough had killed his aide. But wasn't it strange that the case had been kept so amazingly quiet? And wasn't it strange that a twenty-eight-year-old girl who went running regularly should drop dead of a heart condition? Imagine if a dead aide had been found in Hillary Clinton's office!

Moore often says that he's just kidding around. He knows that people feel anxious about not understanding jokes and so if you tell a person you're kidding he will rarely contradict you. If Moore gets the tone just right, he can reach the widest possible audience: the conspiracy nuts will take him seriously and appreciate his insight, while everyone else will think he's joking and appreciate his humor. Every leftist political figure with mainstream aspirations must have a fruitcake technique—a way to retain a hold on the passionate fringe without losing the center—and Moore's is very effective.

Sometimes Moore uses this tactic in reverse. In "Dude, Where's My Country?," under the headline "Admit that the left has made mistakes," Moore writes, "Mumia probably killed that guy. There, I said it." Mumia Abu-Jamal is a holy figure on the left—a black Pennsylvania journalist who wrote about police violence and was sentenced to death in 1982 for killing a white policeman. His supporters claim that he is innocent and that his arrest was politically motivated. Moore's statement provoked outrage among his fans, and on the "Dude" tour many people stood up in the question-and-answer sessions to challenge him on it. Moore told the questioners that, sadly, they didn't understand satire: he reminded them that the statement about Mumia appeared in the book a few lines before Moore claimed not to have had sex before he was thirty-two. (It's true that the Mumia statement appeared in a satirical context, but, as Moore admits, he meant it seriously.) In the end, those who cared about Mumia were assured that Moore still believed in the Cause, while everyone else appreciated his willingness to tip the left's sacred cows. "You can't debate satire," Moore says. "Either you get it or you don't."

During the sixties, when Moore was a teen-ager, the left understood satire and the political uses of humor. There were the Smothers Brothers, "Laugh-In," Lenny Bruce. Yes, there may have been a split between the hippies and the hardworking S.D.S. types, but when the Yippies were formed, to unite them, the combination seemed to work. Stew Albert, a former Yippie, claims Moore as a descendant. He can imagine the two of them rabble-rousing in Berkeley with Jerry Rubin, though, he says, "how well we got along would depend on how tightly he pushed that class proletarian image. We didn't dress up like workers. We went for a more festive look." It's the pranks that make Moore and the Yippies seem similar. On his TV shows, Moore sent a gay men's choir to sing to Jesse Helms; he tried to present a suitcase full of cash, "corp aid," to companies that were being fined for malfeasance; he had his correspondent buy some slaves in Mississippi, because the state hadn't yet ratified the Thirteenth Amendment. Forty years ago, Albert, Abbie Hoffman, and Rubin stood in the gallery of the New York Stock Exchange and threw handfuls of cash onto the floor below and watched chaos erupt as the brokers scrambled for the money. They applied for a permit to encircle the Pentagon and attempt to levitate it in order to rid the building of evil


WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCONVENIENCE.
CHENEY

You hugging me? Are you hugging me? I don't see anyone else here... YOU HUGGING ME??
Shanahan

spirits. In 1968, at the Democratic National Convention, in Chicago, they put up a pig as a candidate for President. (Moore put up a felon for President and ran a ficus for Congress.)

But in spirit Moore and the Yippies are worlds apart. The Yippies were making fun of institutions so large that they were almost abstractions: they were mocking not Lyndon Johnson but the Presidency; not the head of the Stock Exchange but capitalism in toto (their slogan was "The death of money"); not the Secretary of Defense but all wars. For Moore, though, everything is personal. He's not angry with capitalism, or even with companies; he's angry with Roger Smith, the C.E.O. of General Motors, and Philip Knight, the C.E.O. of Nike. He doesn't fight against war; he fights against Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Bush.

To the Yippies, the world was ludicrous, America (or, rather, Amerika) and its laws and customs were ludicrous, and the goal was to expose this absurdity so thoroughly that Americans would throw it all gloriously out the window and start again. Allen Ginsberg thought that if antiwar protesters in Berkeley were attacked by the police they should respond by singing nursery rhymes or doing mass calisthenics. He wanted protesters to carry placards with pictures of fruit on them. Yippies saw themselves as the offspring of the Dadaists and the Surrealists, who had been politicized by the horror of the First World War: Ginsberg's fruit placards were descended from Dada's meaningless sound poems; running a pig for President echoed Duchamp signing a urinal and exhibiting it as art. But Moore doesn't find the world ludicrous, and he doesn't want a revolution. When he talks about what America should be like, he talks about the good old days when people looked out for one another and stuck to old-fashioned values like the Golden Rule. Moore is a satirist, and satire doesn't unseat conventions; it reinforces them.

In one episode of "The Awful Truth," Moore assembled a mobile mosh pit—a crowd of yelling, jumping, dancing, half-naked teen-agers in the open back of a truck. He drove the mosh pit to the headquarters of each of the Presidential candidates in 2000 and told whoever answered the door that he would endorse his candidate if the candidate would dive into the mosh pit (and be held aloft on the hands of the teen-agers) for one minute. All the candidates refused except Alan Keyes, who, encouraged by his young daughter, got up on a stage, smiled, and gamely dove. If the Yippies had staged this prank, it is likely that Alan Keyes would have come off as the hero—the one who didn't take himself or politics too seriously, who wasn't afraid of weird young people, who would risk his suit and his dignity just for the hell of it. To Moore, though, Keyes was the villain—the one who would stoop so low as to dive into a mosh pit, just to pick up an endorsement.

Between the mid-seventies, when the Yippies began to fade from public consciousness, and the late eighties, when Moore appeared, the left seemed to lose its sense of humor. "So many battles were lost," Moore says. "When the Vietnam War was over and the freshman class was elected to Congress in '76, people thought that things were going to be good. But the only Democrat who could get elected was a fairly conservative Democrat, Jimmy Carter, who brought back draft registration only a few years after the war, and eliminated federal funding for abortions, and backed the wrong people in El Salvador. And then suddenly Reagan was President. There was a twenty-year period when the only victory the left had was stopping Judge Bork. I think people just became embittered."

"I found the left stifling," Kathleen Glynn says, remembering the eighties. "I didn't like it, I didn't want to be around it, I was bored out of my fucking mind. Being criticized for wearing perfume because it wasn't feminist. And the invisible sign on the door: 'Do not come in unless you know the left alphabet forwards and backwards and all your times tables.' It was intimidating."

During the Vietnam War, comedy had been on the side of the left, because the left was taking the materialist position: while the right espoused lofty goals like saving the world from Communism and establishing freedom, the left wanted to prevent people from dying. But after the war the left became preoccupied with abstract issues: it stopped worrying about death and started worrying about dignity. A large part of what came to be called political correctness in the eighties consisted literally of prohibiting jokes. Meanwhile, much explicitly political comedy migrated to the right—not the religious right but the party-of-prosperity right, the right of money and Martinis and Wall Street. One of the emblematic right-wing humorists of the time, P. J. O'Rourke, appears on one of his book jackets dressed like an investment banker from 1985—suspenders, striped shirt, loud tie, cigar.

It wasn't that after Carter comedians suddenly started voting Republican—comedians then as now were a liberal bunch. But for a decade their comedy for the most part ceased to be political. (The TV show "Roseanne," of course, was a notable exception.) "Everything had been about politics for so long that we got bored with big issues and started talking about weird hair," Merrill Markoe, who worked on "Letterman" in the eighties and was a "TV Nation" correspondent, says. Randy Cohen, who in the nineties contributed to the political humor at "TV Nation," was famous in the eighties for inventing "monkey cam"—a stunt on "Letterman" in which a small camera was tied to a monkey who ran around the studio. In the past few years, Al Franken has been writing political books that, like Moore's, have become best-sellers; but during the five years in the eighties when he worked at "Saturday Night Live" there was a tacit agreement at the show, he says, not to take a particular political position. The most popular comedy show that the decade produced, "Seinfeld," advertised itself as the show about nothing. The Seinfeld, weird-hair style of humor was about as far from political rhetoric as it was possible to get: while Seinfeld and other standup comics talked about things that were such intimate, familiar parts of daily life that they didn't even have names—the annoying little silver tape in CD packages; the creepy warm feeling of a seat that someone has recently sat on—politicians talked about things that were so abstract that they were only names: terror, freedom, truth.

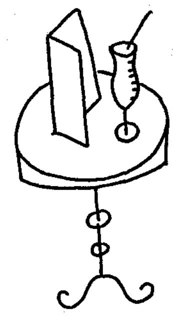
In the late seventies and early eighties, much of the left stopped producing humor and started analyzing it, with often painfully unfunny results. Leftist intellectuals who had come of age in the sixties began to write about laughter as an anarchic force, overturning power by making it seem ridiculous. They were inspired chiefly by the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work was first translated into English and published in America in 1968. Bakhtin described a kind of laughter that flourished in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in the racy writings of Rabelais and Erasmus, and during medieval carnivals in which hierarchies were toppled and social rules gleefully violated in a burst of parodic frenzy. This "people's laughter," according to Bakhtin, was quite different from cold, modern, bourgeois satire, which he felt was purely destructive: the people's laughter was a mockery of everything high-flown and spiritual, but it was also a celebration of everything low, natural, and of the body. This line of thinking came from Nietzsche, who declared, in "The Gay Science," that purveyors of moralities and religions were compelled to banish comedy because it revealed that all their ideas were really just sublimated physical urges. "There is no denying that *in the long run* every one of these great teachers of a purpose was vanquished by laughter, reason, and nature," he wrote. "The short tragedy always gave way again and returned into the eternal comedy of existence."

Recently, comedy has switched sides again. The right has once more become the party of abstractions—the party of terror, freedom, and truth—while humorists on the left like Moore (and Molly Ivins, Jon Stewart, David Cross, and Janeane Garofalo) have reoccupied the low ground of material need. The second President Bush doesn't lack a sense of humor, but his humor is apolitical. Al Franken points out that in "Journeys with George," a documentary about Bush's election campaign in 2000, Bush's idea of a joke was to swoop his face into the camera. He did this over and over and over and over again.

It may be that comedy moves in cycles for a reason—that a political creed needs both the earthliness of comedy and the air of ideology in order to thrive. "Man *has to* believe, to know, from time to time *why* he exists," Nietzsche wrote, with divine condescension. "His race cannot flourish without a periodic trust in life—without faith in *reason in life*. And again and again the human race will decree from time to time: 'There is something at which it is absolutely forbidden henceforth to laugh.' "

Early in 1986, Moore got a call from the San Francisco-based liberal magazine *Mother Jones*, asking him to become the editor. He took the job, of course—it was a big step up—but he was ambivalent about leaving town. "Flint for Frisco? Most locals would've somersaulted naked through a barn fire for that type of option," Ben Hamper wrote sometime afterward, in his memoir, "Rivethead." "Not Moore. He had this goofy love affair with Flint." Moore wanted to spend his last night in town doing something he'd never done before—visiting Hamper on the assembly line. Hamper took him around and showed him where he worked and introduced him to some of the other guys. "My editor couldn't stop smiling," Hamper writes. "He looked up and down the line as if this was some kind of breathtaking moment in history." At the end of the tour, Moore begged Hamper to let him hit a few rivets. Hamper showed him how to do it, and Moore, smiling more than ever, drove them home.

Moore left Flint in the spring of 1986, and Glynn followed in the summer with all their possessions. One of the first things Moore did at *Mother Jones* was give Ben Hamper a column and put his face on the cover. But within weeks of Glynn's arrival, on their daughter Natalie's first day at school, Moore was fired. He told the *Times* that he was being punished because he opposed running a piece by the writer Paul Berman that was somewhat critical of the Sandinistas' human-rights record in Nicaragua. Adam Hochschild, the chairman of the foundation that owns the magazine, said that he had asked Moore to leave because of inadequate job performance (staff members said he was impossible to work with). After he was fired, Moore held a press conference on the steps of City Hall in San Francisco at which he read aloud from a draft of Berman's article to show how appalling it was. He went on the radio and accused Berman of not speaking Spanish well enough, of not knowing who among the Sandinistas was a Marxist-Leninist and who wasn't, and, more generally, of being a traitor to the left and giving aid and comfort to Reagan. At the time, the Sandinista solidarity movement was a commanding force on the left, one that had divided suspicious human-rights liberals from those who were so horrified by Reagan's support of the Contras that they gave the Sandinistas the benefit of any doubt. The latter group was not particularly interested in dissenting views, and Berman soon became a pariah. Accusatory leaflets were distributed from Berkeley to Managua.



The whole affair became a scandal in leftist circles, played out in gossip and on the letters page of *The Nation*. It was an exhibition of precisely the sort of farcical sanctimoniousness that Moore later decried as a sign that the left was becoming insular to the point of self-parody. Moore was "learning to his cost the old rule that the rich are different," Alexander Cockburn wrote in a column in *The Nation* the week after Moore was fired. "Hochschild is heir to the AMAX mining fortune, and although he has devoted substantial amounts of the family income, originally generated by African wage-slaves, to finance the quasi-liberal periodical *Mother Jones*, he can still behave like a nineteenth-century mill owner. . . . It turned out that the working-class boy from Flint had ideas of his own. This was never the game plan of the rich boy in San Francisco."

Around the same time, Moore called Ben Hamper and told him that he'd been fired in part for giving Hamper a column. He and Hamper were too working-class for the rich liberals at *Mother Jones*, Moore said. They just couldn't handle it. Hamper sympathized, but was perplexed, a few days later, to receive a letter in which *Mother Jones's* managing editor wrote that he hoped that Moore's getting fired wouldn't prevent Hamper from writing for the magazine, and asked him to stay on as a columnist. Hamper turned down the offer out of loyalty, and he is still grateful to Moore for changing his life—he tells everyone that he would never have become a successful writer without him. But, having worked with him for years now, he has reservations. "He didn't treat people well," Hamper says simply.

All the excitement about Berman's piece and Hamper's column and Hochschild's riches distracted Moore for a while, but when it became clear that, no matter how many people he got riled up about the Sandinistas, he was still fired, he got very depressed. He sat around the apartment. He ate a lot. The alternative-media world had turned against him—no one would hire him after the scandal. He decided to sue *Mother Jones* for two million dollars in damages for wrongful termination. Luckily, Ralph Nader soon offered him a grant to write a media-critique newsletter from his headquarters, in Washington, D.C. Moore had admired Nader since high school, when he heard him speak, and he had helped Nader's people for years, whenever they needed a point man in Flint or Detroit.

Moore and his family moved across the country for the second time in six months and set up house in Cleveland Park, near the zoo. But Moore had to leave town the week he arrived in order to attend to the lawsuit in California, and then he got a large advance from a publisher, about fifty thousand dollars, for a book (which, in the end, he didn't write) about Flint and General Motors. Moore claims that Nader heard about the advance and called him in to talk about it. "He'd never gotten an advance like that," Moore says. "He got really upset. He said, 'What makes you think you can write about General Motors?' " (Nader's office denies this and points out that Moore was spending more time in Flint than writing his newsletter.) The office manager told Moore that Nader thought it would be best if he moved out of the office.

Shortly after he was fired from *Mother Jones*, Moore flew back to Flint and heard about a round of layoffs at General Motors. He called Kathleen and told her he wanted to make a movie about them. He didn't have any money, so he sold his house. He sold his bed. He organized bingo games. His suit against *Mother Jones* was successful: he ended up with fifty-eight thousand dollars, and he put all that money into the film. In the end, it cost just under half a million dollars to make.

Moore initially thought that he and Glynn would ride around in a minivan and show the film on college campuses and in union halls. Then, at the Telluride Film Festival, he tracked down Roger Ebert on the street and somehow persuaded him to forsake a Peter Greenaway tribute gala and attend a screening of "Roger & Me" instead. Ebert loved the film, and at the Toronto Film Festival the line to get in to see it went around the block.

Big studios started talking to Moore about deals. He had lunch with an executive from Disney, at which he asked how many theatres Disney would show the movie in and what kind of publicity the company would put behind it. He interrogated the executive about Disney's corporate ties to General Motors. He concluded that Disney wasn't really interested in "Roger & Me," only in locking him in to be its next funny guy. He moved on to the New York Film Festival, where the audience gave the film a seven-minute standing ovation. Now everyone wanted to buy it. Moore, feeling his power, began to make unusual demands: he wanted twenty-five thousand free tickets to be given to unemployed autoworkers; he wanted twenty-five thousand dollars to be donated to the five families who were shown getting evicted in the film; he insisted that the movie not be shown in any country that he felt practiced segregation, such as South Africa or Israel; he wanted one seat kept empty for Roger Smith at every showing. But studios kept bidding and the price kept getting higher. Finally, he sold it to Warner Bros. for three million dollars—an unprecedented sum for a documentary.

After the movie's New York Film Festival showing, the Festival's organizers threw a party in a town house on the Upper East Side. Moore and Glynn were thrilled. "It was our big giant night out in New York. It was like, Wow, isn't this exciting," Glynn says. "This town house was all marble and everything, and paintings on the wall, and carpets were rolled up." But it turned out to be a kind of radical chic—the fancy party that Leonard Bernstein threw for the Black Panthers—in reverse. "They served beans and franks," Glynn says. "We were from the working class, so they thought that was cool. But we knew better than that. When you throw a party, you throw a party. I've never been able to shake it." Shortly afterward, the movie opened in Michigan. Warners gave it extensive publicity, thinking that just this once a documentary might do well in ordinary working-class areas, but it didn't. People went to see Steven Seagal instead.

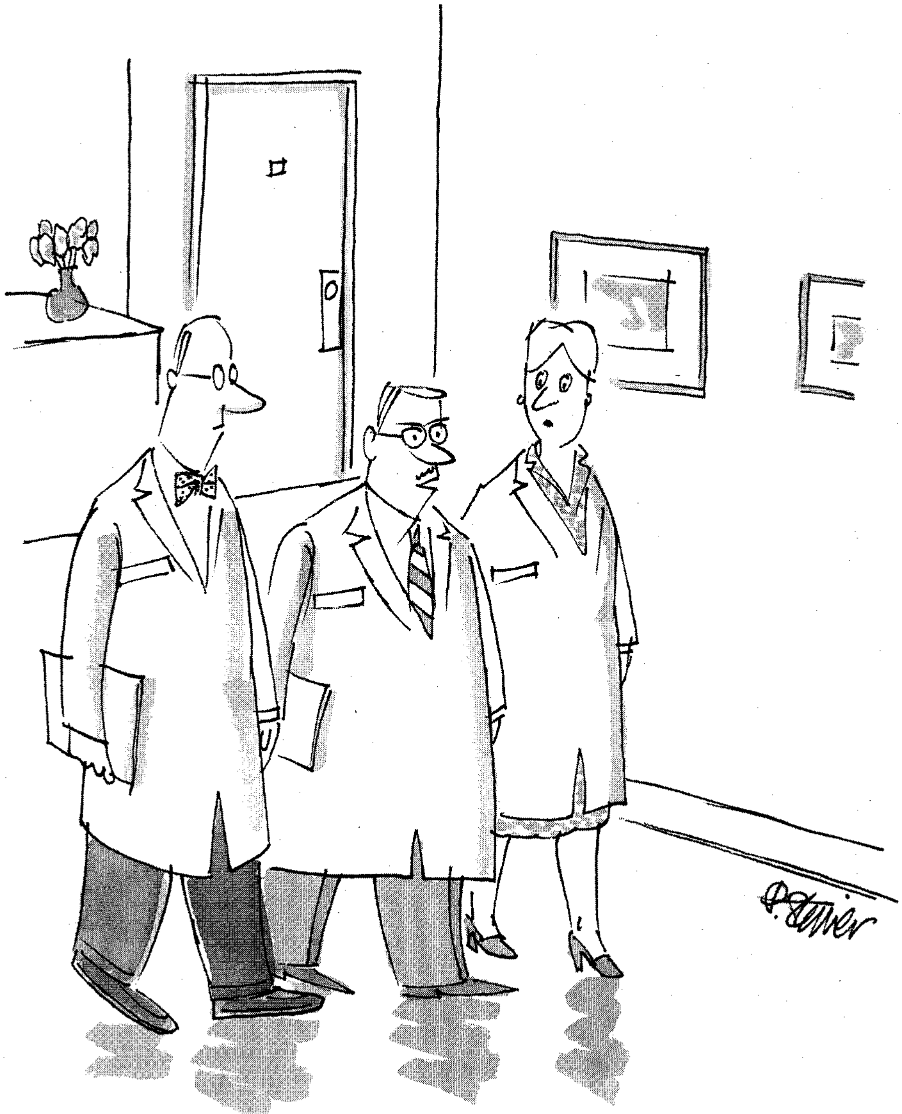
After the adoration that Moore had received at the film festivals, there was bound to be a backlash, and it came very quickly. In late 1989, Harlan Jacobson, the editor of the magazine *Film Comment*, accused Moore of muddling the chronology in his film, to make it seem that events that took place before G.M.'s layoffs—the city's absurd revival projects, including the building of a large Hyatt Regency, a shopping center, and a theme park called AutoWorld—were a consequence of them. The movie's time line is indeed misleading; and yet it didn't have to be. Some G.M. layoffs took place before those projects—just not the particular layoffs Moore talks about in the film. Moore says he told Jacobson that he considered the story to have started in his childhood, not when he returned to Flint from San Francisco, as it seems in the film. He didn't include actual dates because he didn't want to make that sort of documentary. Jacobson didn't get it, Moore says now. If he wanted exact chronology, he should have watched C-SPAN.

Moore has since been criticized, sometimes inaccurately, for getting facts wrong; he says that he employs fact-checkers and lawyers but that some mistakes inevitably get through. The most recent instance of this problem was Moore's characterization of Bush as a "deserter," which caused considerable embarrassment for the Presidential candidate he had endorsed, Wesley Clark. As is often the case with Moore's mistakes, it was quite unnecessary: he could have drawn damaging attention to the months that Bush went missing from his National Guard duties, but by using incorrectly the military term "deserter" he damaged his own side.

Moore believes that his critics are motivated by agendas that have nothing to do with their overt arguments. "It's always personal," he says. "They want to attack me personally so that people won't listen to what I have to say. Of course, it doesn't work. The readership only expands, the viewership for the movies only expands, and they just look ridiculous in the process."

"I don't think he ever accepted any of the criticism," the former "TV Nation" employee says. "What you have to understand is that there's a little jujitsu move that's common with people who believe they're saving the world, which is, 'The more you attack me,' not 'the more you reveal my flaws' but 'the more you reveal how insecure you are with what I was trying to say—so you attack me on technicalities.' "

Despite the backlash, when Moore came to put together "TV Nation" many people had loved "Roger & Me" so much, and were so happy to be working with Moore, that they would have worked free. His employees expected him to be the ideal boss—after all, he was the defender of the little guy. Moore was a wonderful boss in one respect: he was willing to take a risk on people. "Michael gave so many people the chance to do jobs that they'd never done before, and that's rare in entertainment," Eric Zicklin, a writer on "TV Nation," says. "It was incredibly intoxicating for everybody. We came to work thrilled." Moore was always talking about the Cause, and



*"Why carry malpractice insurance if you don't malpractice once in a while?"*

*"You ever think about upright bipedalism?"*

• •

there was a sense in the office that the show would be a political inspiration to people, that it was expanding the boundaries of television, that it was, in its own way, a kind of revolution. A few of Moore's stunts did effect some remarkable changes. "TV Nation" reported on undocumented workers who had been fired for trying to form a union, and the adverse publicity got them their jobs back. In "The Awful Truth," he staged a mock funeral for a man whose H.M.O. wouldn't cover his fatal condition, and the H.M.O. agreed to change its policy. (Later, in "Bowling for Columbine," he took two students who had been wounded in the shooting to the headquarters of Kmart and persuaded Kmart to stop selling bullets.)

But, as the staff of *Mother Jones* had discovered, Moore wasn't the ideal boss. Little by little, he began to alienate people. He disliked sharing credit with his writers. He would often come in late. He didn't yell at people: if someone said something he didn't like, he wouldn't argue; he would simply not invite that person to the next meeting, or the person would be fired. There was something of a split on the show between comedy people and activists or documentary types. Moore gradually realized that he didn't like working with comedy people, and stopped hiring them. Over the years, as he found a small group he trusted, he grew more confident and learned to delegate, and his projects grew more peaceful. "Along the way the side of the road was littered with a lot of bad comedy, wasted time and bitter individuals," Glynn writes now, in an e-mail. "Past employee grumblings are somewhat pointless. . . . They exist in a comedy ghetto, one we have pole-vaulted over."

One day during production on the first season of the show, Moore called two of his writers into his office. It was, for both of them, their first job in television, and they had been hired with the title of associate producer. They were not members of the Writers' Guild, the powerful union for writers in movies and TV, and thus were not receiving health benefits, and would not qualify later for a percentage of video and rerun sales. "Michael said, 'I'm getting a lot of heat from the union to call you guys writers and pay you under the union rules,' " Eric Zicklin, one of the associate producers, says. " 'I don't have the budget for that. But if they keep coming down on me that'll mean I'll only be able to afford one of you and the other one's gotta go.' "

Moore appeared to have surmised (incorrectly) that the two writers had been appealing to the union behind his back. (Moore says that he doesn't remember this and that he insisted that "TV Nation" be a union show.) "He wanted to let us know that this would hurt us if it continued," Zicklin says. "We were scared out of our minds. It was like a theme from 'Roger & Me.' " Of course, no one would have thought twice about a meeting like that with any other boss—but this was Michael Moore.

One by one, his employees stopped believing in the Cause. The job became just a job, and Moore became just another boss in a business that had an almost limitless tolerance for bad behavior. But, because they had once believed in him, their disappointment was painful. "I have let go of Michael," the former "TV Nation" employee says, in the shakily resolute tone of a reforming alcoholic. "I have not seen one of his products, his movies, his TV shows, his books. I'm sure they're all good. I'm sure they're spreading the message and enraging all the right people. But I can't accept him as a political person. I can't buy into this thing of Michael Moore is on your side—it's like trying to believe that Justin Timberlake is a soulful guy. It's a media product: he's just selling me something. For the preservation of my own soul I have to consider him as just an entertainer, because otherwise he's a huge asshole. If you consider him an entertainer, then his acting like a selfish, self-absorbed, pouty, deeply conflicted, easily wounded child is run-of-the-mill, standard behavior. But if he's a political force, then he's a jerk and a hypocrite and he didn't treat us right and he was false in all of his dealings."

"I thought he was great on the Academy Awards," Chris Kelly, who worked on "TV Nation" and "Canadian Bacon," says. "I thought that was a great thing to say. But I can't go to his movies and I can't hold his books for very long. When he started writing his column in *The Nation*, I cancelled my subscription. He broke my heart. That's what he does to people."

Some of Moore's former employees have managed to stay friends with him, and they tend to regard the charges against him as silly. "I think they're a bunch of girls and they should take off their skirts and stop crying," Karen Duffy, a correspondent on "TV Nation" and "The Awful Truth," says. "It's not like they had to lift anything heavy. It's TV! When you're putting out a weekly show, you're under a lot of pressure, but I've worked with him for five years and I've never seen him blow up. I've never done anything I've been more proud of than working with Michael Moore. I just hate the way the left is constantly cannibalizing itself." Perhaps personality shouldn't matter in politics when larger issues are at stake. But Moore himself has made it matter. "Roger & Me" brought personality to a left that believed that facts alone should be enough to move people to action. Moore's work is emotionally compelling because Michael Moore, the fat man in the baseball cap, the passionate working-class whistleblower, the everyman's friend who puts his arm around you when the sadness of the world makes you cry, is leading you through what might otherwise be a disheartening mishmash of calamities.

A few years ago, Moore decided to apologize to some of those he had hurt. He apologized to the "TV Nation" correspondent Merrill Markoe and he apologized to Chris Kelly. "I reached a point, a place in my life where I didn't see myself as a perfect person," Moore says, "and I wanted to apologize for anything I've done or said to people." "He's definitely the product of a Catholic upbringing," Moore's friend Danny Goldberg says. "He's very hard on himself—really, really worries about whether he's doing the right thing and how to do what he's doing better, tortures himself about every little detail." Chris Kelly says, "I think he has a very powerful moral sense. And I think he woke up one day and it occurred to him that everyone who had ever worked with him wasn't working with him anymore."

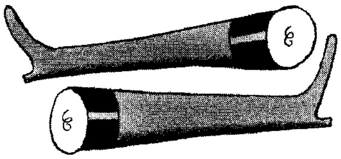
A week after he spoke in Cambridge, Moore gave a morning performance in Munich, at the Mathäser Filmpalast, a big cinema complex in the center of town.

"I'm sorry I have to speak in English," he said to the audience, after asking them to forgive him for being nearly an hour late. "See, I'm American, we don't learn foreign languages. But that's why we're smiling all the time—you can see us coming down the street, you know. Hey! Hi! How's it going? We've got that big shit-eating grin on our face all the time because our brains aren't loaded down."

At the beginning of the question period, a middle-aged man in the front row had the microphone: "It is known that oil interests have profoundly supported the Bush family for generations, but it is not widely known, though there is a lot of comment in some press, that organized crime has a profound influence on the Bush family. Can you comment?"

"I don't want to comment on that right now. I'm making a movie and I've been looking into some of these things you're discussing," Moore said. "The film's called 'Fahrenheit 9/11'—the temperature at which truth burns."

Another man in the front row rose to speak: "I think you must have heard about the Pearl Harbor theory, that the Americans knew exactly what was going to happen in Pearl Harbor, they let it happen, and everybody knows what was the retaliation of that. Do you see any repeating of history, and what would be your recommendation for our peace in the world?"



At this point, Moore decided to pause and investigate a little.

"How many people in here believe that Bush knew not just that something was going to happen but exactly what was going to happen on 9/11?" he asked.

About twenty-five people out of the thousand in the audience raised their hands.

"And how many believe that the American government had something to do with executing the attacks on September 11th?"

About the same number believed it. Moore paused. "Well, I don't believe that the Bush Administration had something to do with September 11th," he said quietly. "I do believe that there were a lot of warning signals, but I don't think they were ignored on purpose—Bush just wanted to go to the ranch for a month."

Twenty-five out of a thousand is unusually low for a German audience. Munich is a fairly conservative city in the Bavarian south. A recent poll found that twenty per cent of Germans believed that the C.I.A. organized the attacks on the World Trade Center; the figure was thirty-three per cent for Germans under thirty. Another poll, conducted shortly before Moore set out on his tour, found that nearly sixty per cent of Europeans believed Israel to be, of all the countries in the world, the "biggest threat to world peace," and that, in a grading of such threats, the United States outranked Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and Afghanistan. Moore is not quite that European in his views, but he comes close. He believes that the United States should not take military action under any circumstances except emergency self-defense. He is not opposed to all military intervention per se, but he feels that the U.S. should feel obliged to refrain from militarism until it has restored its moral reputation.

The question period continued; a young man in a corduroy jacket had the microphone. "Germany's paid for these really bad things that they did to the Jewish years ago," he said. "America doesn't pay anything to the Indians when they did really bad things. Can you tell me please what is the reason that nowadays no one is discussing to get the Americans to pay for what they did in Iraq?"

"Because we're Americans," Moore told him with tired sarcasm. "Why should we have to pick up our mess?" ♦

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

# LISTEN TO THIS

*A classical kid learns to love pop—and wonders why he has to make a choice.*

BY ALEX ROSS

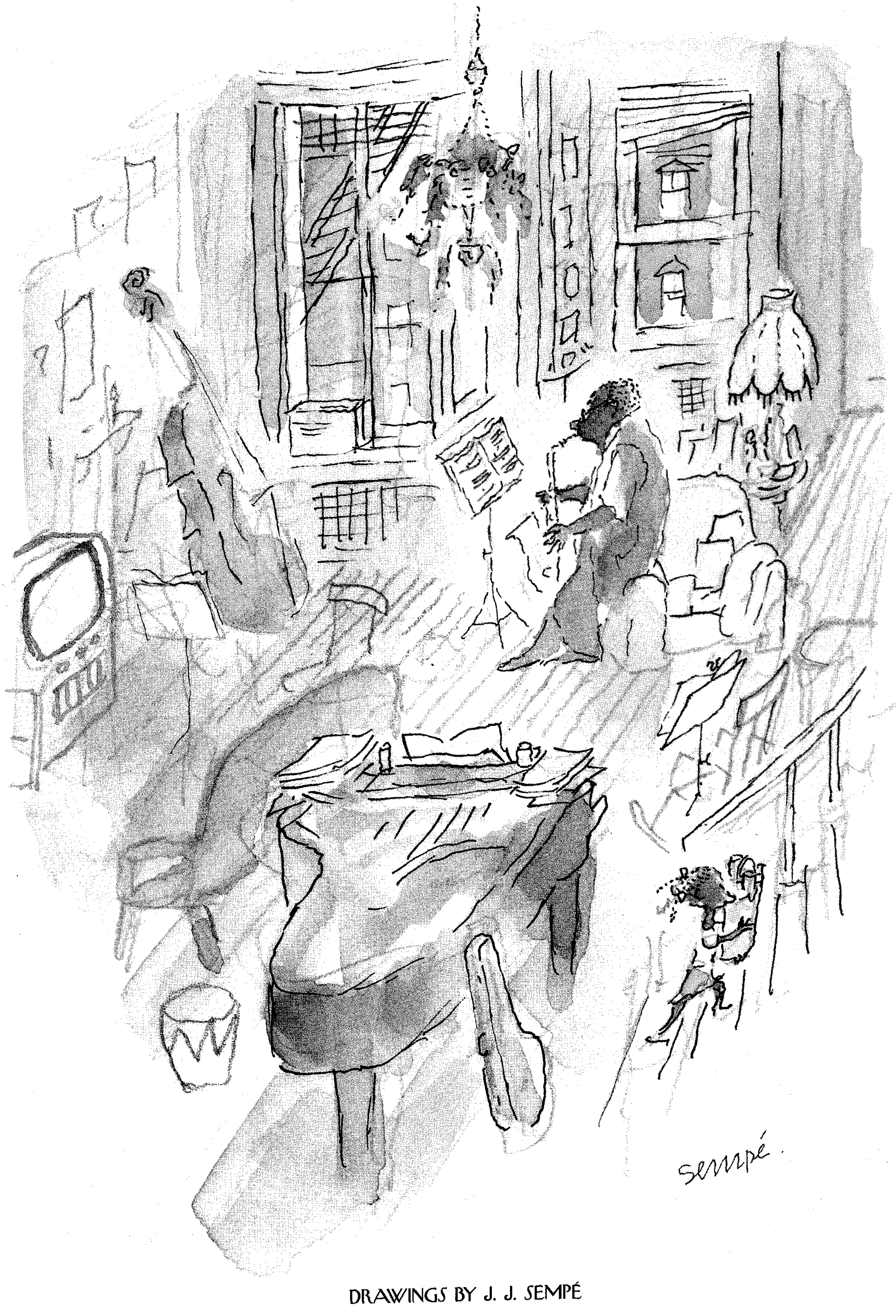
I hate "classical music": not the thing but the name. It traps a tenaciously living art in a theme park of the past. It cancels out the possibility that music in the spirit of Beethoven could still be created today. It banishes into limbo the work of thousands of active composers who have to explain to otherwise well-informed people what it is they do for a living. The phrase is a masterpiece of negative publicity, a tour de force of anti-hype. I wish there were another name. I envy jazz people who speak simply of "the music." Some jazz aficionados also call their art "America's classical music," and I propose a trade: they can have "classical," I'll take "the music."

For at least a century, the music has been captive to a cult of mediocre élitism that tries to manufacture self-esteem by clutching at empty formulas of intellectual superiority. Consider some of the rival names in circulation: "art" music, "serious" music, "great" music, "good" music. Yes, the music can be great and serious; but greatness and seriousness are not its defining characteristics. It can also be stupid, vulgar, and insane. Music is too personal a medium to support an absolute hierarchy of values. The best music is music that persuades us that there is no other music in the world. This morning, for me, it was Sibelius's Fifth; late last night, Dylan's "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands"; tomorrow, it may be something entirely new. I can't rank my favorite music any more than I can rank my memories. Yet some discerning souls believe that the music should be marketed as a luxury good, one that supplants an inferior popular product. They say, in effect, "The music you love is trash. Listen instead to our great, arty music." They gesture toward the heavens, but they speak the language of high-end real estate. They are making little headway with the unconverted because they have forgotten to define the music as something worth loving. If it is worth loving, it must be great; no more need be said.

When people hear "classical," they think "dead." The music is described in terms of its distance from the present, its resistance to the mass—what it is not. You see magazines with listings for Popular Music in one section and for Classical Music in another, so that the latter becomes, by implication, Unpopular Music. No wonder that stories of its imminent demise are so commonplace. The Web site ArtsJournal features a media file with the deliberately ridiculous name Death of Classical Music Archive, whose articles recycle a familiar litany of problems: record companies are curtailing their classical divisions; orchestras are facing deficits; the music is barely taught in public schools, almost invisible on television, ignored or mocked by Hollywood. But the same story could have been written ten years ago or twenty. If this be death, the record is skipping. A complete version of the Death of Classical Music Archive would go back to the fourteenth century, when the sensuous melodies of *ars nova* were thought to signal the end of civilization.

The classical audience is assumed to be a moribund crowd of the old, the white, the rich, and the bored. Statistics provided by the National Endowment for the Arts suggest that the situation is not quite so dire. Yes, the audience is older than that for any other art—the median age is forty-nine—but it is not the wealthiest. Musicals, plays, ballet, and museums all get larger slices of the $50,000-or-more income pie (as does the ESPN channel, for that matter). If you want to see an in-your-face, Swiss-bank-account display of wealth, go look at the millionaires sitting in the skyboxes at a Billy Joel show, if security lets you. Nor is the classical audience aging any faster than the rest of America. The music may not be a juggernaut, but it is a major world. American orchestras sell around thirty million tickets each year. Brilliant new talents are thronging the scene; the musicians of the august Berlin Philharmonic are, on average, a generation younger than the Rolling Stones.

The music is always dying, ever-



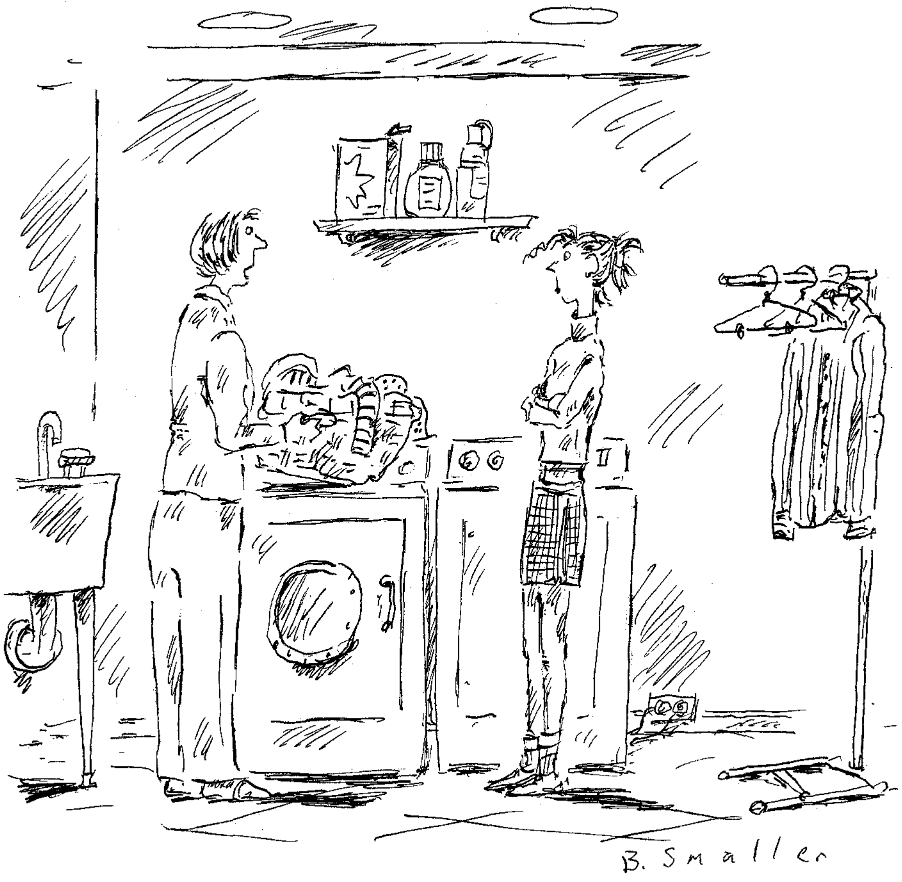
DRAWINGS BY J. J. SEMPÉ

ending. It is an ageless diva on a nonstop farewell tour, coming around for one absolutely final appearance. It is hard to name because it never really existed to begin with—not in the sense that it stemmed from a single time or place. It has no genealogy, no ethnicity: leading composers of today hail from China, Estonia, Argentina, Queens. The music is simply whatever composers create—a long string of written-down works to which various performing traditions have become attached. It encompasses the high, the low, empire, underground, dance, prayer, silence, noise. Composers are genius parasites; they feed voraciously on the song matter of their time in order to engender something new. They have gone through a rough stretch in the past hundred years, facing external obstacles (Hitler and Stalin were amateur music critics) as well as problems of their own invention ("Why doesn't anyone like our beautiful twelve-tone music?"). But they may be on the verge of an improbable renaissance, and the music may take a form that no one today would recognize. For now, it is like the "sunken cathedral" that Debussy depicts in one of his Preludes—a city that chants beneath the waves.

The critic Greg Sandow recently wrote in his online journal that we partisans of the classical need to speak more from the heart about what the music means. He admits that it's easier to analyze his ardor than to express it. The music does not lend itself to the same generational storytelling as, say, "Sgt. Pepper." There may be kids out there who lost their virginity during Brahms's D-Minor Piano Concerto, but they don't want to tell the story and you don't want to hear it. The music attracts the reticent fraction of the population. It is an art of grand gestures and vast dimensions that plays to mobs of the quiet and the shy. It is a paradise for passive-aggressives, sublimation addicts, and other relics of the Freudian world. Which may explain why it has a hard time expressing itself in the time of Dr. Phil.

I am a thirty-six-year-old white American male who first started listening to popular music at the age of twenty. In retrospect, this seems strange; perhaps "freakish" is not too strong a word. Yet it seemed natural at the time. I feel as though I grew up not during the seventies and eighties but during the thirties and forties, the decades of my parents' youth. They came of age in the great American middlebrow era, when the music had a much different place in the culture than it does today. In those years, in what now seems like a surreal dream world, millions listened as Toscanini conducted the NBC Symphony on national radio. Walter Damrosch explained the classics to schoolchildren, singing ditties to help them remember the themes. (My mother remembers one of them: "This is / The sympho-nee / That Schubert wrote but never fi-nished . . .") NBC would broadcast Ohio State vs. Indiana one afternoon, a recital by Lotte Lehmann the next. In my house, it was the Boston Symphony broadcast followed by the Redskins game. I was unaware of a yawning gap between the two.

Early on, I reached for my parents' record collection, which was well stocked with artifacts of the Golden Age. I listened to Toscanini's Brahms, Koussevitzky's Sibelius, the Budapest Quartet. The look and feel of the records were inseparable from the sound they made. They said so much to me that for a long time I had no curiosity about other music. There was Otto Klemperer's Zeppelin-like, slow-motion account of "The St. Matthew Passion," with nightmare-spawning art by the Master of Delft. Toscanini's fierce recordings were decorated with Robert Hupka's snapshots of the Maestro in motion, his face registering every emotion between ecstasy and disgust. Mozart's Divertimento in E-Flat featured the famous portrait in which the composer looks down at the world in sorrow, like a general surveying a hopeless battle. While listening, I read along in the liner notes, which were generally written in the over-the-top everyman-orator style that Orson Welles parodied brilliantly in "Citizen Kane." Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, for example, was said to be "melancholy, sometimes progressing to abysmal depths." None of this made sense at the time; I had no acquaintance



*"We want you to have fun, as long as it's fun that enhances a college-admission application."*

with melancholy, let alone abysmal depths. What mattered was the exaggerated swoop of the thought, which roughly matched the pattern of the sound.

The first music that I loved to the point of distraction was Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony. My parents had a disk of Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic—one of a series of Music-Appreciation Records put out by the Book-of-the-Month Club. A companion record provided Bernstein's analysis of the symphony, a road map to its forty-five-minute sprawl. I now had names for the shapes that I perceived. (The conductor's "Joy of Music" and "Infinite Variety of Music" remain the best introductory books of their kind.) Bernstein drew attention to something that happens about ten seconds in—a C-sharp that unexpectedly sounds against the plain E-flat-major harmony. "There has been a stab of intrusive otherness," he said, cryptically but seductively, in his nicotine baritone. Over and over, I listened to this note of otherness. I bought a score and deciphered the notation. I learned some time-beating gestures from Max Rudolf's conducting manual. I held my family hostage in the living room as I led the record player in a searingly intense performance of the "Eroica."

Did Lenny get a little carried away when he called that soft C-sharp in the cellos a "shock," a "wrench," a "stab"? If you were to play the "Eroica" for a fourteen-year-old hip-hop scholar versed in the works of Eminem and 50 Cent, he might find it shockingly boring at best. No one is slicing up his wife or getting shot nine times. But I would submit to my young gangsta interlocutor that those artists are relatively shocking—relative to the social norms of their day. Although the "Eroica" ceased to be controversial in the these-crazy-kids-today sense around 1830, within the "classical" frame it has continued to deliver its surprises right on cue. Seven bars of E-flat major, then the C-sharp that hovers for a moment before disappearing: it is like a speaker stepping up to a microphone, launching into the first words of a grand oration, and then faltering, as if he had just remembered something from childhood or seen a sinister face in the crowd.

I don't identify with the listener who responds to the "Eroica" by saying, "Ah, civilization." That wasn't what Beethoven wanted: his intention was to shake the European mind. I don't listen to music to be civilized; sometimes, I listen precisely to escape the ordered world. What I love about the "Eroica" is the way it manages to have it all, uniting Romanticism and Enlightenment, civilization and revolution, brain and body, order and chaos. It knows which way you think the music is going and veers triumphantly in the wrong direction. The Danish composer Carl Nielsen once wrote a monologue for the spirit of Music, in which he or she or it says, "I love the vast surface of silence; and it is my chief delight to break it."

Around the time I got stabbed by Beethoven's C-sharp, I began trying to write music myself. My career as a composer lasted from the age of eight to the age of twenty. I lacked both genius and talent. My spiral-bound manuscript book includes an ambitious program of future compositions: thirty piano sonatas, twelve violin sonatas, various symphonies, concertos, fantasias, and funeral marches, most of them in the key of D minor. Scattered ideas for these works appear in the following pages, but they don't go anywhere, which was the story of my life as a composer. Still, I treasure the observation of one of my college teachers, who wrote on the final page of my end-of-term submission that I had created a "most interesting and slightly peculiar sonatina." I put down my pen and withdrew into silence, like Sibelius in Järvenpää.

My inability to finish anything, much less anything good, left me with a profound respect for this impossible mode of making a living. Composition at its most intense is a rebellion against reality. No one except the very young demands new music, and even when we are young the gates of inattention crash down quickly. Composers manufacture a product that is universally deemed superfluous—at least until their music enters public consciousness, at which point people begin to say that they could not live without it. For more than a century, the repertory has consisted largely of music by dead composers. Yet half of those on the American Symphony Orchestra League's top-ten most-performed list—Mahler, Strauss, Ravel, Shostakovich, Prokofiev—hadn't been born when the first draft of the repertory got written.

Throughout my teens, I took piano lessons from a man named Denning Barnes. He also taught me composition, music history, and the art of listening. He was a wiry man with tangled hair, whose tweed jackets emitted an odd smell that was neither pleasant nor unpleasant, just odd. He was intimate with Beethoven, Schubert, and Chopin, and he also loved twentieth-century music. Scriabin, Bartók, and Berg were three favorites. He opened another door for me, in a wall that I never knew existed. His own music, as far as I can remember, was rambunctious, jazzy, a little nuts. One day he pounded out one of the variations in Beethoven's final piano sonata and said that it was an anticipation of boogie-woogie. I had no idea what boogie-woogie was, but I was excited by the idea that Beethoven had anticipated it. The marble-bust Beethoven of my childhood suddenly became an eagle-eyed sentinel on the ramparts of sound, spying nameless entities on the horizon. "Boogie-woogie" was a creature out of Bernstein's serious-fun world, and Mr. Barnes was my private Bernstein. There was not a snobbish bone in his body; he was a skeleton of enthusiasm, a fifteen-dollar-an-hour guerrilla fighter for the music he loved. He died of a brain tumor in 1989. The last time I saw him, we played a hair-raising version of Schubert's Fantasia in F Minor for four hands. It was full of wrong notes, most of them at my end of the keyboard, but it felt great and made a mighty noise, and to this day I have never been able to tolerate any other performance of the work, not even Britten and Richter's.

By high school, a terrible truth had dawned: I was the only person my age who liked this stuff. Actually, there were other classical nerds at my school, but we were too diffident to form a posse. Several "normal" friends dragged me to a showing of "Pink Floyd—The Wall," after which I conceded that one passage sounded Mahlerian. Only in college did my musical fortress finally crumble. I spent most of my days and nights at the campus radio station, where I had a show and helped organize the classical contingent. I fanatically patrolled the boundaries of the classical broadcasting day, refusing to surrender even fifteen minutes of "Chamber Music Masterworks" and the like. At 10 P.M., the schedule switched from classical to punk, and only punk of the most recondite kind. Once a record sold more than a few hundred copies, it was kicked off the playlist. The d.j.s liked to start their sets with the shrillest, crudest songs in order to scandalize the classical crowd. I tried to one-up them by ending my show with squalls of Xenakis. They hit back with Sinatra singing "Only the Lonely." Once, they followed up my heartfelt tribute to Herbert von Karajan with Skrewdriver's rousing neo-Nazi anthem "Prisoner of Peace": "Free Rudolf Hess / How long can they keep him there? We can only guess." Touché.

The thing about these cerebral punk rockers is that they were easily the most interesting people I'd ever met. Between painstakingly researched tributes to Mission of Burma and the Butthole Surfers, they composed undergraduate theses on fourth-century Roman fortifications and the liberal thought of Lionel Trilling. I began hanging around in the studio after my show was over, suppressing an instinctive fear of their sticker-covered leather jackets and multicolored hair. I informed them, as Mr. Barnes would have done, that Schoenberg had anticipated all of this. And I began listening to new things. The first two rock records I bought were Pere Ubu's "Terminal Tower" compilation and Sonic Youth's "Daydream Nation." I crept from underground rock to alternative rock and finally to the full-out commercial kind. Soon I was astounding my friends with pronouncements like " 'Highway 61 Revisited' is a pretty good album," or "The White Album is a masterpiece." I abandoned the notion of classical superiority, which led to a crisis of faith: if the music wasn't great and serious and high and mighty, what was it?

For a little while, living in Northern California after college, I thought of giving up on the music altogether. I sold off a lot of my CDs, including all my copies of the symphonies of Arnold Bax, in order to pay for more Pere Ubu and Sonic Youth. I cut my hair short, wore angry T-shirts, and started hanging out at the Berkeley punk club 924 Gilman Street. I became a fan of a band called Blatz, which was about as far from Bax as I could get. (Their big hit was "Fuk Shit Up.") Fortunately, no one needed to point out to my face that I was in the wrong place. It is a strange American dream, this notion that music can give you a new personality, a new class, even a new race. The out-of-body experience is thrilling as long as it lasts, but most people are eventually deposited back at the point where they started, and they may begin to hate the music for lying to them. When I went back to the classical ghetto, I chose to accept its limitations. I realized that, despite the outward decrepitude of the culture, there was still a bright flame within. It occurred to me that if I could somehow get from Brahms to Blatz, others could go the same route in the opposite direction. I have always wanted to talk about classical music as if it were popular music and popular music as if it were classical.

For many, popular music is the soundtrack of raging adolescence, while the other kind chimes in during the long twilight of maturity. For me, it's the reverse. Listening to the "Eroica" reconnects me with a kind of childlike energy, a happy ferocity about the world. Since I came to pop music late, I invest it with more adult feeling. To me, it's penetrating, knowing, full of microscopic shades of truth about the way things really are. Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks" anatomizes a doomed relationship with a saturnine clarity that a canonical work such as "Die Schöne Müllerin" can't match. (Listening recently to Ian Bostridge sing the Schubert cycle, I had the thought that the protagonist might never have spoken to the miller girl for whose sake he drowns himself. How classical of him.) If I were in a perverse mood, I'd say that the "Eroica" is the raw, thuggish thing—a blast of ego and id—whereas a song like Radiohead's "Everything in Its Right Place" is all cool adult irony. The idea that life is flowing along with unsettling smoothness, the dark C-sharpness of the world sensed but not confirmed, is a resigned sort of sentiment that Beethoven probably never even felt, much less communicated. What I refuse to accept is that one kind of music soothes the mind and another kind soothes the soul. Depends on whose mind, whose soul.

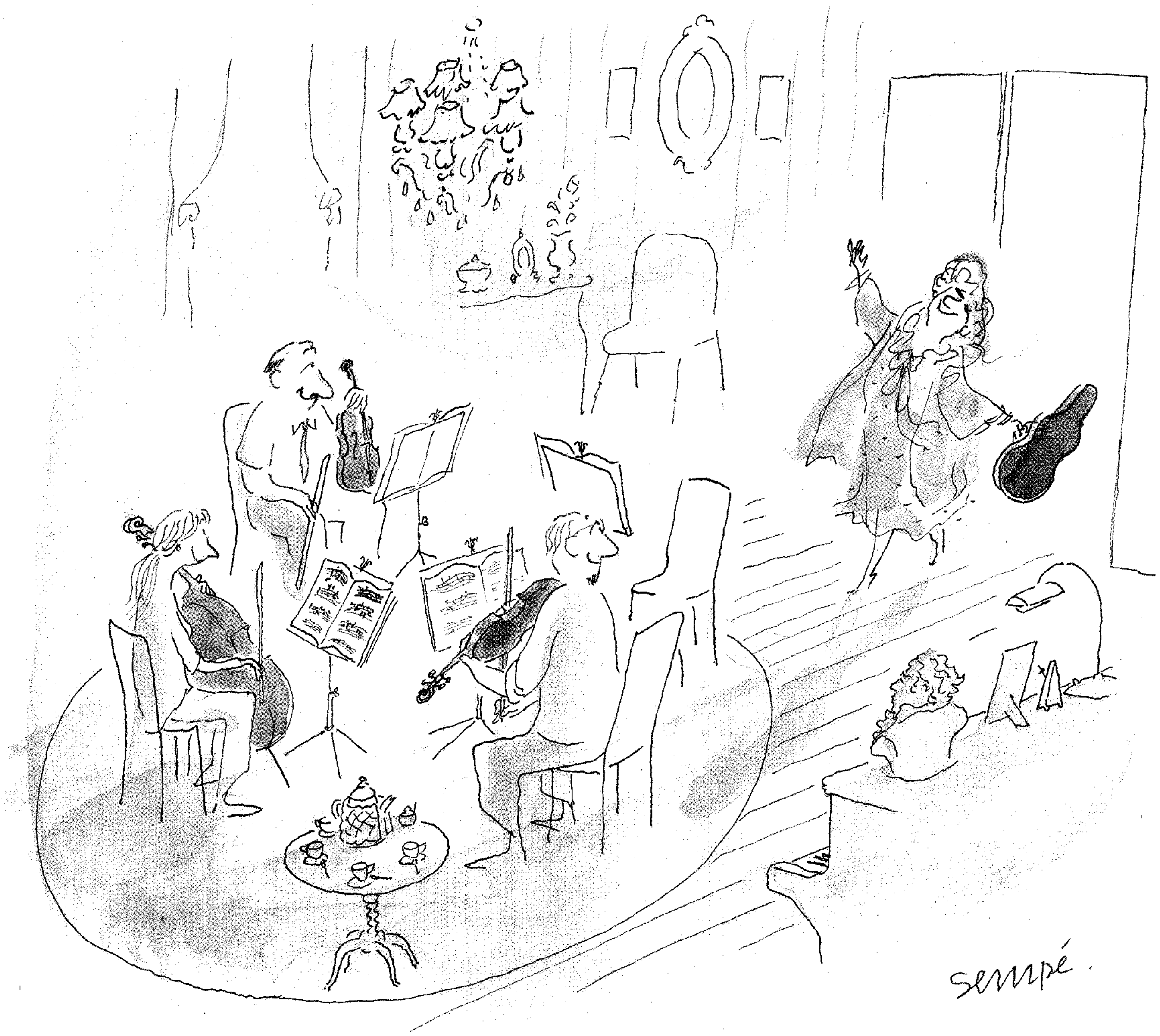
On my iPod I've been listening to the new Missy Elliott song "Wake Up." It's an austere hip-hop track with a political edge. Something about the music sets off my classical radar. There are, effectively, only three notes, free-floating and ambiguous. The song begins with a clip of a voice shouting "Wake up!" The voice rises up a tritone, and that interval determines the notes. The idea of generating music from the singsong of speech is ancient, but "Wake Up" reminds me in particular of two minimalist pieces by Steve Reich, "It's Gonna Rain" and "Come Out." Both use tapes of impassioned black voices to create seething electronic soundscapes. Whether Elliott and her producer, Timbaland, have listened to Reich is beside the point. (If you say, "Of course they haven't," ask yourself what makes you so certain.) The song works much like Reich's compositions, building a world from a sliver of sound. It's almost manic and obsessive enough to be classical music.

The fatal phrase came into circulation late in the game. From Monteverdi to Beethoven, modern music was the only music, bartered about in a marketplace that resembled modern pop culture. Concerts were eclectic hootenannies in which opera arias collided with chunks of sonatas. Barrel-organ grinders carried the best-known arias out into the streets, where they were blended with folk tunes. Concerts in pre-classical America were a stylistic free-for-all, a mirror of the country's mixed-up nature. Walt Whitman mobilized grand opera as a metaphor for democracy; the voices of his favorite singers were integral to the swelling sound of his "barbaric yawp."

In Europe, the past began to overwhelm the present just after 1800. Johann Nikolaus Forkel's 1802 biography of Bach, one of the first major books devoted to a dead composer, may be the founding document of the classical mentality. All the earmarks are there: the longing for lost worlds, the adulation of a single godlike entity, the horror of the present. Bach was "the first classic that ever was, or perhaps ever will be," Forkel proclaimed. "If the art is to remain an art and not to be degraded into a mere idle amusement, more use must be made of classical works than has been done for some time." By "idle amusement" Forkel had in mind the prattling of Italian opera; his biography is addressed to "patriotic admirers of true musical art," namely the German. The notion that the music of Forkel's time was teetering toward extinction is, of course, amusing in retrospect; in the summer of 1802, Beethoven began work on the "Eroica." Scholars eventually defined the Classical Era as Viennese music of the late eighteenth century, especially Mozart and Haydn, who, in their day, had been racy, modern figures. The word was nonsense from the outset.

The rise of "classical music" mirrored the rise of the commercial middle class, which employed Beethoven as an escalator to the social heights. Concert halls grew quiet and reserved, habits and attire formal. Improvisation was phased out; the score became sacred. Audiences were discouraged from applauding while the music was going on—it had been the custom to clap after a good tune or a dazzling solo—or between movements. Patrons of the Wagner festival in Bayreuth proved notoriously militant in the suppression of applause. At an early performance of "Parsifal," listeners hissed an unmusical vulgarian who yelled out "Bravo!" after the Flower Maidens scene. The troublemaker had reason to feel embarrassed; he had written the opera. The Wagnerians were taking Wagner more seriously than he took himself—an alarming development.

Composers liked the fact that listeners were quieting down; the subtle shock of a C-sharp wouldn't register if the crowd were chattering away. Even so, the emergence of a self-styled élite audience had limited appeal for the likes of Beethoven and Verdi, who did not come from that world. The nineteenth-century masters were, most of them, monstrous egomaniacs, but they were not snobs. Verdi wrote for the masses, and he scandalously proclaimed the box office the only barometer of success. Wagner, surrounded by luxury, royalty, and extreme pretension, nonetheless railed against the emergence of a "clas-



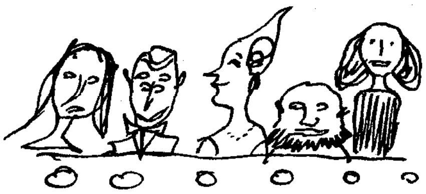
sical" repertory, for which he blamed the Jews. His nauseating anti-Semitism went hand in hand with a sometimes deeply charming populism. In a letter to Liszt, he raged against the "monumental character" of the music of his time, the "clinging and sticking to the past." Another letter demanded, "*Kinder! macht Neues! Neues!, und abermals Neues!*" Ezra Pound condensed this thought as "Make it new."

Unfortunately, the European bourgeoisie, having made a demigod of Beethoven, began losing interest in even the most vital living composers. In 1859, a critic wrote, "New works do not succeed in Leipzig. Again at the fourteenth Gewandhaus concert a composition was borne to its grave." The crazy modern music in question was Brahms's First Piano Concerto. By 1870, seventy-five per cent of works in the Gewandhaus repertory were by dead composers. The fetishizing of the past had a degrading effect on composers' morale. They began to doubt their ability to please this implacable audience, which seemed prepared to reject their wares no matter what style they wrote in. If no one cares, composers reasoned, we might as well write for connoisseurs—or for each other. This was the mentality that gave birth to the phenomenon of Arnold Schoenberg. The relationship between composer and public became a vicious circle; the more the composer asserted independence, the more the public clung to the past. A critic who attended the première of the "Eroica" saw the impasse coming: "Music could quickly come to such a point, that everyone who is not precisely familiar with the rules and difficulties of the art would find absolutely no enjoyment in it."

The American middle class carried the worship of the classics to a necrophiliac extreme. Lawrence Levine, in his book "Highbrow/Lowbrow," gives a devastating portrait of the country's musical culture at the turn of the twentieth century. It was a world that abhorred virtuosity, extravagance, anything that smacked of entertainment. Orchestras dedicated themselves to "the great works of the great composers greatly performed, the best and profoundest art, these and these alone," in the redundant words of the conductor Theodore Thomas, who was the founder of the modern American orchestra. Early in his career, Thomas tried to attract the masses, conducting in parks and beer gardens. Later, he decided that the working classes could never appreciate greatly great great music like Beethoven's. He was a marvellous conductor, by all accounts, but his infatuation with "cultivated persons" set a bad precedent.

Within a decade or two, American symphonic culture was so ossified that progressive spirits were calling for change. "America is saddled, hag-ridden, with culture," the critic-composer Arthur Farwell wrote in 1911. "There is a conventionalism, a cynicism, a self-consciousness, in symphony concert, recital, and opera." Daniel Gregory Mason, a maverick Columbia professor, similarly attacked the "prestige-hypnotized" plutocrats who ran the New York Philharmonic. He found more excitement at open-air concerts at Lewisohn Stadium, in Harlem, where the audience freely expressed its enthusiasm. Mason delightedly quoted a notice that read, "We would respectfully request that the audience refrain from throwing mats." His sentiment still rings true—concerts would be better if there were more throwing of mats.

In the nineteen-thirties, Farwell's populist philosophy took root. A generation of composers, conductors, and broadcasters embraced the idea of "music for all." The storied middlebrow age began. David Sarnoff, the head of NBC, had a vision of Toscanini conducting for a vast public, and the public duly materialized. The first broadcast day of CBS featured an American opera: "The King's Henchman," by Deems Taylor. Hollywood studios hired composers such as Korngold, Copland, and Herrmann and pursued the modernist giants Schoenberg and Stravinsky (both of whom asked for too much money). F.D.R. funded a Federal Music Project that in two and a half years entertained ninety-five million people; there were concerts in delinquent-boys' homes and rural Oklahoma towns. A Boston reporter pictured one Federal opera performance as a storming of the Bastille: "Drivers, chauffeurs, and footmen were occupying the seats of the master and the madame at 83 cents a chair."



Perhaps the boldest forward leap was the invention of a hybrid music combining European tradition and new popular forms. Duke Ellington wrote symphonic jazz for Carnegie Hall; his "Black, Brown, and Beige" was heard there in 1943. Morton Gould and Leonard Bernstein wrote for orchestra, jazz ensemble, and Broadway without worrying about the ranking of each. The ultimate phenomenon was George Gershwin, who rose through Tin Pan Alley and then through the orchestral world, transforming America's idea of what a composer was. For all his Jazz Age glamour, some part of Gershwin remained a lonely classical kid—the hard-practicing pianist who had filled scrapbooks with concert programs from Cooper Union and Wanamaker's Auditorium. In Vienna, in 1928, Gershwin met his idol, Alban Berg, who had the Kolisch Quartet play him the "Lyric Suite." Gershwin then sat down at the piano, but hesitated, wondering aloud whether he was worthy of the occasion. "Mr. Gershwin," Berg said sternly, "music is music."

The middlebrow utopia sputtered out quickly, and for a variety of reasons. Federally funded arts projects fell victim to a classic American culture war—the Republicans versus the New Deal—for which fanatics on both the left and the right were to blame. Orchestras that had flourished on radio foundered on television. (No one wants to get that close to oboists.) But the real problem was with the competition. Jazz was satisfying a hunger for popular art that in previous eras only classical composers had been able to satisfy. Ellington and Mingus were pulling off the same synthetic feat that Mozart and Verdi had accomplished before them; they were picking up pieces of every form of available music—African-American, Latin, Gypsy, Debussy, operetta—and transforming them through the force of their personalities.

Lately, I have been reading the young intellectuals who embraced jazz in the twenties, and I recognize their urge to join the party. Carl Van Vechten, the notorious author of "Nigger Heaven," started out as a music critic for the *Times;* he witnessed "The Rite of Spring" and embraced Stravinsky as a savior. Then his attention began to wander. He found more life and truth in ragtime, Tin Pan Alley, and, eventually, blues and jazz. In a 1917 article for *Vanity Fair,* he predicted that Tin Pan Alley songwriters were likely to be considered "the true grandfathers of the Great American Composer of the year 2001." For young African-American music mavens, the disenchantment was more bitter and more personal. Some were children of a middle class that had taken to heart Dvořák's 1893 prophecy of a great age of Negro music. The likes of James Weldon Johnson awaited the black Beethoven who would write the music of God's trombones. Soon enough, these aspiring violinists, pianists, and composers came up against a wall of racism. Only in popular music could they make a living. Many—Fletcher Henderson, for example—turned to jazz.

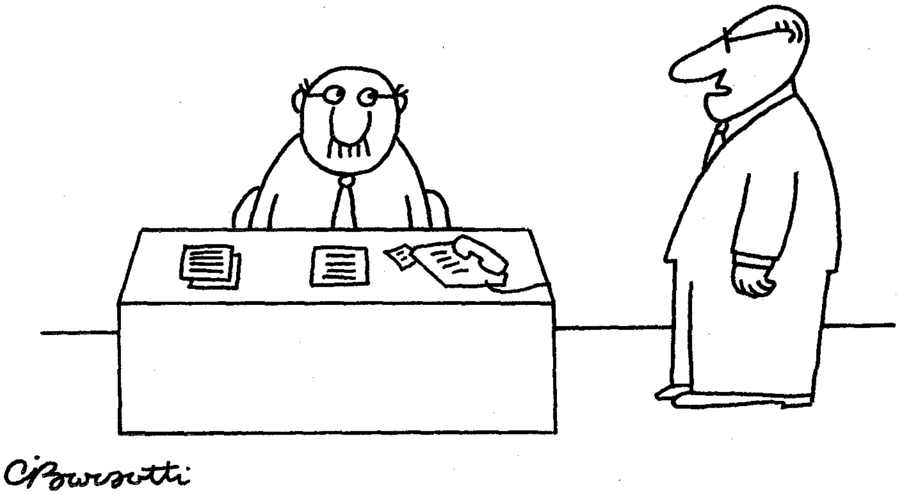
The twenties saw a huge change in music's social function. Classical music had given the middle class aristocratic airs; now popular music helped the middle class to feel down and dirty. There is American musical history in one brutally simplistic sentence. I recently watched a silly 1934 movie entitled "Murder at the Vanities," which seemed to sum up the genre wars of the era. It is set behind the scenes of a Ziegfeld-style variety show, one of whose numbers features a performer, dressed vaguely as Franz Liszt, who plays the Second Hungarian Rhapsody. Duke Ellington and his band keep popping up behind the scenes, throwing in insolent riffs. Eventually, they drive away the effete classical musicians and play a takeoff called "Ebony Rhapsody": "It's got those licks, it's got those tricks / That Mr. Liszt would never recognize." Liszt comes back with a submachine gun and mows down the band. The metaphor wasn't so far off the mark. Although many in the classical world were fulsome in their praise of jazz—Ernest Ansermet lobbed the word "genius" at Sidney Bechet—others fired verbal machine guns in an effort to slay the upstart. Daniel Gregory Mason, the man who wanted more throwing of mats, was one of the worst offenders, calling jazz a "sick moment in the progress of the human soul."

The contempt flowed both ways. The culture of jazz, at least in its white precincts, was much affected by that inverse snobbery which endlessly congratulates itself on escaping the élite. (The singer in "Murder at the Vanities" brags of finding a rhythm that Liszt, of all people, could never comprehend: what a snob.) Classical music became a foil against which popular musicians could assert their earthy cool. Composers, in turn, were irritated by the suggestion that they constituted some sort of moneyed behemoth. They were the ones who were feeling bulldozed by the power of cash. Such was the complaint made by Lawrence Gilman, of the *Tribune,* after Paul Whiteman and his Palais Royal Orchestra played "Rhapsody in Blue" at Aeolian Hall. Gilman didn't like the "Rhapsody," but what really incensed him was Whiteman's suggestion that jazz was an underdog fighting against symphony snobs. "It is the Palais Royalists who represent the conservative, reactionary, respectable elements in the music of today," Gilman wrote. "They are the aristocrats, the Top Dogs, of contemporary music. They are the Shining Ones, the commanders of huge salaries, the friends of Royalty." The facts back Gilman up. By the late twenties, Gershwin was making at least a hundred thousand dollars a year. In 1938, Copland, the best-regarded composer of American concert music, had $6.93 in his checking account.

THE MEANING OF LIFE
CHEESE AND CRACKERS
ZIEGLER

All music becomes classical music in the end. Reading the histories of other genres, I often get a warm sense of déjà vu. The story of jazz, for example, seems to recapitulate classical history at high speed. First, the youth-rebellion period: Satchmo and the Duke and Bix and Jelly Roll teach a generation to lose itself in the music. Second, the era of bourgeois grandeur: the high-class swing band parallels the Romantic orchestra. Stage 3: artists rebel against the bourgeois image, echoing the classical modernist revolution, sometimes by direct citation (Charlie Parker works the opening notes of "The Rite of Spring" into "Salt Peanuts"). Stage 4: free jazz marks the point at which the vanguard loses touch with the mass and becomes a self-contained avant-garde. Stage 5: a period of retrenchment. Wynton Marsalis's attempt to launch a traditionalist jazz revival parallels the neo-Romantic music of many late-twentieth-century composers. But this effort comes too late to restore the art to the popular mainstream. Jazz recordings sell about the same as classical recordings, three per cent of the market.

The same progression worms its way through rock and roll. What were



*"Your clone, Melford, has come of work age—you must leave now."*

my hyper-educated punk-rock friends but Stage 3 high modernists, rebelling against the bloated Romanticism of Stage 2 stadium rock? Right now, there seems to be a lot of Stage 5 classicism going on in what remains of rock and roll. The Strokes, the Hives, the Vines, the Stills, the Thrills, and so on hark back to some lost pure moment of the sixties or seventies. Their names are all variations on the Kinks. Many of them use old instruments, old amplifiers, old soundboards. One rocker was recently quoted as saying, "I intentionally won't use something I haven't heard before." *Macht Neues*, kids! So far, hip-hop has proved resistant to this kind of classicizing cycle, but you never know. It is just a short step from old school to the Second Viennese School.

The original classical is left in an interesting limbo. It has a chance to be liberated from the social clichés that currently pin it down. It is no longer the one form carrying the burden of the past. Moreover, it has the advantage of being able to sustain constant reinterpretation, to renew itself with each repetition. The best kind of classical performance is never a retreat into the past but rather an intensification of the present. When you hear a great orchestra perform Beethoven's "Eroica," it isn't like a rock band trying to mimic the Beatles—it is like the Beatles reincarnated. The mistake that apostles of the classical have always made is to have joined their love of the past to a dislike of the present. The music has other ideas: it hates the past and wants to escape.

I have seen the future, and it is called Shuffle—the setting on the iPod that skips randomly from one track to another. I've transferred about a thousand songs, works, and sonic events from my CD collection to my computer and on to the MP3 player. There is something thrilling about setting the player on Shuffle and letting it decide what to play next. Sometimes its choices are a touch delirious—I had to veto an attempt to forge a link between György Kurtág and Oasis—but the little machine often goes crashing through barriers of style in ways that change how I listen. For example, it recently made a segue from the furious crescendo of "The Dance of the Earth," ending Part I of "The Rite of Spring," right into the hot jam of Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues." The first became a gigantic upbeat to the other. For a second, I felt that I was at some madly fashionable party at Carl Van Vechten's. On the iPod, music is freed from all fatuous self-definitions and delusions of significance. There are no record jackets depicting bombastic Alpine scenes or celebrity conductors with a family resemblance to Rudolf Hess. Instead, music is music.

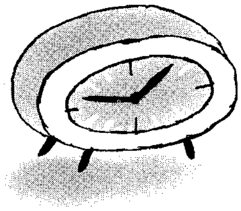
It seems to me that a lot of younger listeners think the way the iPod thinks. They are no longer so invested in a single genre, one that promises to mold their being or save the world. This gives the life-style disaster called "classical music" more of a chance. Although the music is far from attaining any sort of countercultural cachet, it is no longer a plausible target for teen rebellion, given that all the parents listen to the Eagles. (A colleague pointed out to me that the movie "School of Rock" pictures a private school where classical music is forced down students' throats. The closing credits don't specify which alternate universe this is set in.) Committed rock fans are likely to know a fair amount about twentieth-century composition, especially the avant-garde. Mavens of electronic dance music list among their heroes Stockhausen, Terry Riley, and, especially, Steve Reich, who avoids the temptation to sue his less inventive admirers. Mark Prendergast's book "The Ambient Century," a history of the new electronic genres, begins, startlingly enough, with Gustav Mahler.

The new buzzword in progressive circles is "post-classical." The phrase was coined by the writer Joseph Horowitz, and it neatly expresses exasperation with the C word without jettisoning it. It also hints that life will go on even if monuments of the old classical empire falter. The scholar Robert Fink is even predicting a Richard Strauss-style "death and transfiguration." Post-classical composers are writing music heavily influenced by minimalism and its electronic spawn, but they are still immersed in the complexity of composition. They just don't need to advertise an entire course of study on the surface of a work. Likewise, new generations of musicians are dropping the mask of Olympian detachment (silent, stone-faced musician walks onstage and begins to play). They've started mothballing the tuxedo, explaining the music from the stage, using lighting and backdrops to produce a mildly theatrical experience. They are finding allies in the "popular" world, some of whom care less about record sales than the average star violinist. The London Sinfonietta, for example, will be playing a program next month of Aphex Twin, Jamie Lidell, and other sonic scientists from the Warp Records label, pairing their work with the constructions of Reich and Cage. The borders between "popular" and "classical" are becoming creatively blurred, and only the Johann Forkels in each camp see a problem.

The strange thing about the music in America today is that large numbers of people seem aware of it, curious about it, even mildly knowledgeable about it, but they do not go to concerts. The people who try to market orchestras have a name for these annoying phantoms: they are "culturally aware non-attenders," to quote a recent article in the magazine *Symphony*. I know the type; most of my friends are case studies. They know the principal names and periods of musical history: they know what Nietzsche said about Wagner, they can pick Schoenberg and Stravinsky out of a lineup, they own Glenn Gould's "Goldberg Variations" and some Mahler and perhaps a CD of Arvo Pärt. They follow all the other arts—they go to gallery shows, read new novels, see art films. Yet they have never paid money for a classical concert. They almost make a point of their ignorance. "I don't know a thing about Beethoven," they say, which is not what they would say if the subject were Henry James or Stanley Kubrick. This is one area where even sophisticates wrap themselves in the all-American anti-intellectual flag. It's not all their fault: centuries of classical intolerance have gone into the creation of the culturally aware non-attender. When I tell people what I do for a living, I see the same look again and again—a flinching sideways glance, as if they were about to be reprimanded for not knowing about C-sharps. After this comes the serene declaration of ignorance. The old culture war is fought and lost before I say a word.

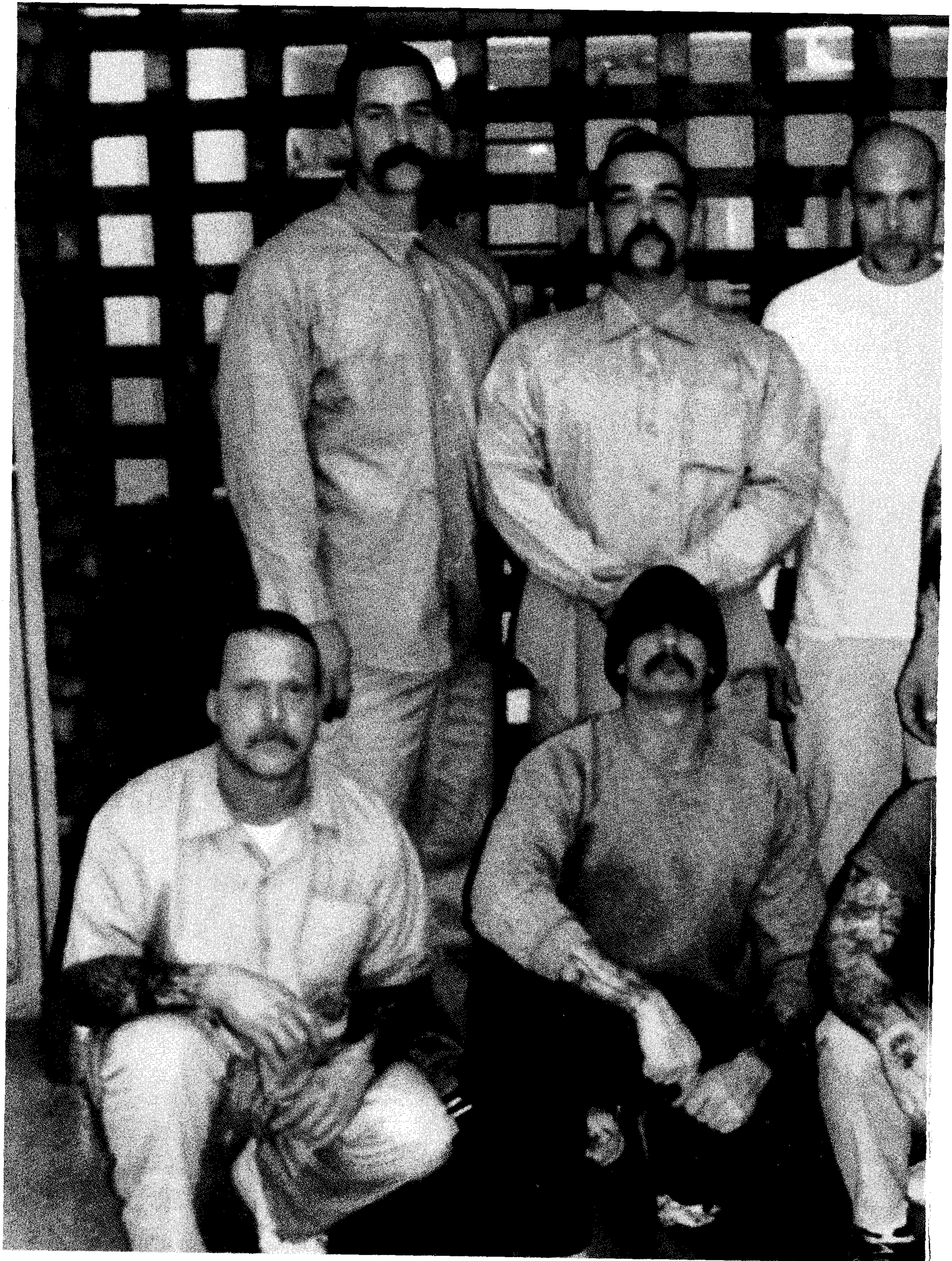
I'm imagining myself on the other side—as a thirty-six-year-old pop fan who wants to try something different. On a lark, I buy a record of Otto Klemperer conducting the "Eroica," picking this one because Klemperer is the father of Colonel Klink, on "Hogan's Heroes." I hear two impressive loud chords, then something that the liner notes allege is a "truly heroic" theme. It sounds kind of feeble, lopsided, waltz-like. My mind drifts. A few days later, I try again. This time, I hear some attractive adolescent grandeur, barbaric yawps here and there. The rest is mechanical, remote. But each time I go back I map out a little more of the imaginary world. I invent stories for each thing as it happens. Big chords, hero standing backstage, a troubling thought, hero orating over loudspeakers, some ideas for songs that don't catch on, a man or woman pleading, hero shouts back, tension, anger, conspiracies—assassination attempt? The nervous splendor of it all gets under my skin. I go to a bookstore and look at the classical shelf, which seems to have more books for Idiots and Dummies than any other section. I read Bernstein's essay in "The Infinite Variety of Music," coördinate some of the examples with the music, read fun stories of the composer screaming about Napoleon, and go back and listen again. Sometime after the tenth listen, the music becomes my own; I know what's around almost every corner and I exult in knowing. It's as if I could predict the news.

I am now enough of a fan that I buy a twenty-five-dollar ticket to hear a famous orchestra play the "Eroica" live. It is not a very heroic experience. I feel dispirited from the moment I walk in the hall. My black jeans draw disapproving glances from men who seem to be modelling the Johnny Carson collection. I look around dubiously at the twenty shades of beige in which the hall is decorated. The music starts, but I find it hard to think of Beethoven's detestation of all tyranny over the human mind when the man next to me is a dead ringer for my dentist. The assassination sequence in the first movement is less exciting when the musicians have no emotion on their faces. I cough; a thin man, reading a dog-eared score, glares at me. When the movement is about a minute from ending, an ancient woman creeps slowly up the aisle, a look of enormous dissatisfaction on her face, followed at a few paces by a blank-faced husband. Finally, three grand chords to finish, which the composer obviously intended to set off a roar of applause. I start to clap, but the man with the score glares again. One does not applaud in the midst of greatly great great music, even if the composer wants one to! Coughing, squirming, whispering, the crowd visibly suppresses its urge to express pleasure. It's like mass anal retention. The slow tread of the Funeral March, or *Marcia funebre*, as everyone insists on calling it, begins. I start to feel that my newfound respect for the music is dragging along behind the hearse.

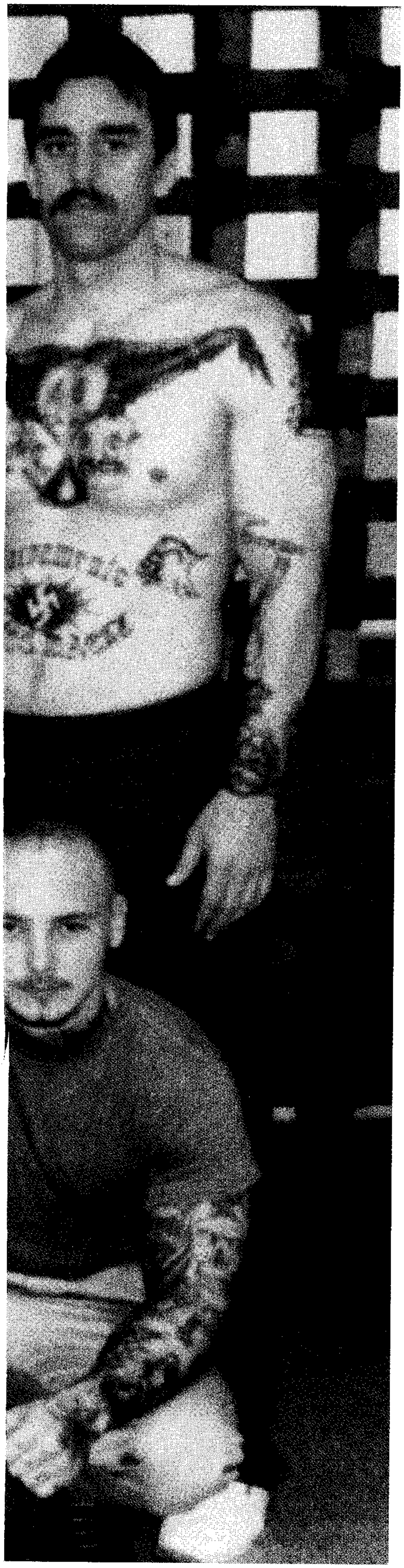


But I stay with it. For the duration of the Marcia, I try to disregard the audience and concentrate on the music. It strikes me that what I'm hearing is an entirely natural phenomenon, nothing more than the vibrations of creaky old instruments reverberating around a box-like hall. Each scrape of a bow translates into a strand of sound; what I see is what I hear. So when the cellos and basses make the floor tremble with their big deep note in the middle of the march (what Bernstein calls the "*wham!*") the force of the moment is purely physical. Amplifiers are for sissies, I'm starting to think. The orchestra isn't playing with the same cowed intensity as Klemperer's heroes, but the tone is warmer and deeper and rounder than on the CD. I make my peace with the stiffness of the scene by thinking of it as a cool frame for a hot event. Perhaps this is how it has to be: Beethoven needs a passive audience as a foil. To my left, a sleeping dentist; to my right, an angry aesthete; and, in front of me, the funeral march that rises to a fugal fury, and breaks down into softly sobbing memories of themes, and then gives way to an entirely new mood—hard-driving, laughing, lurching, a little drunk.

Two centuries ago, Beethoven bent over the manuscript of the "Eroica" and struck out Napoleon's name. It is often said that he made himself the protagonist of the work instead. Indeed, he engendered an archetype—the rebel artist hero—that modern artists are still recycling. I wonder, though, if Beethoven's gesture meant what people think it did. Perhaps he was freeing his music from a too specific interpretation, from his own preoccupations. He was setting his symphony adrift, as a message in a bottle. He could hardly have imagined it travelling two hundred years, through the dark heart of the twentieth century and into the pulverizing electronic age. But he knew it would go far, and he did not weigh it down. There was now a torn, blank space on the title page. The symphony became a fragmentary, unfinished thing, and unfinished it remains. It becomes whole again only in the mind and soul of someone listening for the first time, and listening again. The hero is you. ♦



*Michael McElhiney, upper right, in the mid-nineties, with reputed gang members and associates at Leavenworth, where he ran a dru*



*ig and allegedly ordered hits.*

### ANNALS OF CRIME

# THE BRAND

*How the Aryan Brotherhood became the most murderous prison gang in America.*

BY DAVID GRANN

On a cold, damp December morning in 2002, after weeks of secret planning, the United States Marshals launched one of the most unusual dragnets in the organization's two-hundred-and-fifteen-year history. As the fog lifted on a small stretch of land in the northwesternmost corner of California—a sparsely populated area known primarily for its towering redwoods—nearly a dozen agents, draped in black fatigues and bulletproof vests, and armed with assault rifles and walkie-talkies, gathered in a fleet of cars. The agents sped past a town with a single post office and a mom-and-pop store, and headed deep into the forest until they arrived at a colossal compound, a maze of buildings surrounded by swirling razor wire and an electrified fence that was lethal to the touch. A gate opened and, as guards looked down with rifles from beneath watchtowers, the convoy rolled inside. The agents jumped out.

After entering one of the buildings and walking down a long corridor lined with surveillance cameras, the officers reached their destination: a fortified cellblock in the heart of Pelican Bay, California's most notorious prison. They could hear inmates moving in their ten-by-twelve, windowless cement cells. Pelican Bay housed more than three thousand inmates, men who were considered too violent for any other state prison and had, in the parlance of correctional officers, "earned their way in." But the men on the cellblock, which was known as the Hole, were considered so dangerous that they had been segregated from this already segregated population.

Four prisoners were ordered to remove their gold jumpsuits and slide them through a tray slot. While some officers searched their belongings, others, using flashlights, peered through holes in the steel doors to examine the inmates' ears, nostrils, and anal cavities. To make sure that the prisoners had no weapons "keistered" inside them, the guards instructed them to bend down three times; if they refused, the guards would know that they were afraid to puncture their intestines with a shank. Once the search was complete, the inmates were shackled and escorted to a nearby landing strip, where they were loaded onto an unmarked airplane.

All across the country, agents were fanning out to prisons. They seized a fifth inmate from a maximum-security prison in Concord, New Hampshire. They took another from a jail in Sacramento, California. Then they approached the Administrative Maximum Prison, in Florence, Colorado, a "supermax" encircled by snow-covered ravines and renowned as "the Alcatraz of the Rockies." There, in the most secure federal penitentiary in the country—a place that housed Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, and Ramzi Yousef, the man behind the bombing of the World Trade Center, in 1993—agents apprehended four inmates who were allegedly responsible for more than a dozen prison murders.

Before long, the marshals had rounded up twenty-nine inmates—all of whom were among the most feared men in the American prison system. One had strangled an inmate with his bare hands; another had poisoned a fellow-prisoner. A man nicknamed the Beast was thought to have ordered an attack on an inmate who had shoved him during a basketball game; the inmate was subsequently stabbed seventy-one times and his eye was gouged out.

Then there was Barry Mills, who was known as the Baron. Soft-spoken and intense, with a gleaming bald head, he was described by one of his former prosecutors as a "cunning, calculating killer." He liked to crochet in his cell and, according to authorities, compose lists of enemies to kill. In a previous court case, he testified that "we live . . . in a different society than you do. There is justified violence in our society. I'm here to tell you that. I'm here to tell all you that." He was not, he conceded, "a peaceful man," and "if you disrespect me or one of my friends, I will readily and to the very best of my ability engage you in a full combat mode. That's what I'm about." Once, at a maximum-security prison in Georgia, Mills was found guilty of luring an inmate into a bathroom stall and nearly decapitating him with a knife.

Along with the Baron and the other prisoners, five women on the outside were also seized, as well as three ex-cons and a former prison guard. Most of those apprehended—there were forty in total—were transported on a Boeing 727, with their legs and arms shackled to their seats, while guards patrolled the aisles, their rifles sealed in compartments out of arm's reach. Days later, the prisoners ended up in a Los Angeles courtroom, where they were accused of being members of an elaborate criminal conspiracy directed by the Aryan Brotherhood, or the Brand. Authorities had once dismissed the Aryan Brotherhood as a fringe white-supremacist gang; now, however, they concluded that what prisoners had claimed for decades was true—namely, that the gang's hundred or so members, all convicted felons, had gradually taken control of large parts of the nation's maximum-security prisons, ruling over thousands of inmates and transforming themselves into a powerful criminal organization.

The Brand, authorities say, established drug-trafficking, prostitution, and extortion rackets in prisons across the country. Its leaders, often working out of barren cells in solitary confinement, allegedly ordered scores of stabbings and murders. They killed rival gang members; they killed blacks and homosexuals and child molesters; they killed snitches; they killed people who stole their drugs, or owed them a few hundred dollars; they killed prison guards; they killed for hire and for free; they killed, most of all, in order to impose a culture of terror that would solidify their power. And, because the Brotherhood is far more cloistered than other gangs, it was able to operate largely with impunity for decades—and remain all but invisible to the outside world. "It is a true secret society," Mark Hamm, a prison sociologist, told me.

For the first time, on August 28, 2002, that world cracked open. After more than a decade of trying to infiltrate the Brand's operations, a relatively unknown Assistant United States Attorney from California named Gregory Jessner indicted virtually the entire suspected leadership of the gang. He had investigated hundreds of crimes linked to the gang; some were cold cases that reached back nearly forty years. In the indictment, which ran to a hundred and ten pages, Jessner charged Brand leaders with carrying out stabbings, strangulations, poisonings, contract hits, conspiracy to commit murder, extortion, robbery, and narcotics trafficking. The case, which is expected to go to trial early next year, could lead to as many as twenty-three death-penalty convictions—more than any in American history.

On a recent morning, I visited the United States Attorney's office in downtown Los Angeles, where the prosecution was preparing to arraign the last of the forty defendants. As I waited in the lobby, a slender young man appeared in a gray suit. He had short brown hair, and he carried a folder under his arm as if he were a paralegal. Unlike the attorneys around him, he spoke in a soft, almost reticent voice. He introduced himself as Gregory Jessner.

"I'm forty-two," he told me, as if he were often greeted with similar astonishment. "Believe it or not, I used to look much younger." He reached in his pocket and revealed an old office I.D. He looked seventeen.

He led me back into his office, which had almost nothing on the walls and appeared to be decorated solely with boxes from the case, one stacked upon the other. On his desk were several black-and-white photographs, including one of an inmate who had been strangled by the gang.

"An Aryan brother went in his cell and tied a garrote around his neck," Jessner said. He held out his hands, demonstrating, with tapered fingers, how an Aryan Brotherhood member had braided strips of a bedsheet into a noose. "This is a homicidal organization," he said. "That's what they do. They kill people."

He was accustomed, he explained, to murder cases, but he had been shocked by the gang's brutality. "I suspect they kill more than the Mafia," he said. "They kill more than any single drug trafficker. There are a lot of gang-related deaths on the streets, but they are usually more disorganized and random." He paused, as if calculating various numbers in his head. "I think they may be the most murderous criminal organization in the United States."

There are hundreds of gangs in this country: the Crips, the Bloods, the Latin Dragons, the Dark Side Nation, the Lynch Mob. But the Aryan Brotherhood is one of the few gangs that were born in prison. In 1964, as the nation's racial unrest spread into the penitentiaries, a clique of white inmates at San Quentin prison, in Marin County, California, began gathering in the yard. The men were mostly motorcycle bikers with long hair and handlebar mustaches; a few were neo-Nazis with tattoos of swastikas. Together, they decided to strike against the blacks, who were forming their own militant group, called the Black Guerrilla Family, under the influence of the celebrated prison leader George Jackson. Initially, the whites called themselves the Diamond Tooth Gang, and as they roamed the yard they were unmistakable: pieces of glass embedded in their teeth glinted in the sunlight.

Before long, they had merged with other whites at San Quentin to form a single band: the Aryan Brotherhood. While there had always been cliques in prison, known as "tips," these men were now aligned by race and resorted to a kind of violence that had never been seen at San Quentin, a place that prisoners likened to "gladiator school." All sides, including the Latino gangs La Nuestra Familia and the Mexican Mafia, attacked each other with homemade knives that were honed from light fixtures and radio parts, and hidden in mattresses, air vents, and drainpipes. "Everything was seen through the delusional lens of race—everything," Edward Bunker, an inmate at the time, told me. (He went on to become a novelist, and appeared as Mr. Blue in "Reservoir Dogs.")

Most prison gangs tried to recruit

"fish," the new and most vulnerable inmates. But according to interviews with former gang members—as well as thousands of pages of once classified F.B.I. reports, internal prison records, and court documents—the Aryan Brotherhood chose a radically different approach, soliciting only the most capable and violent. They were given a pledge:

An Aryan brother is without a care,
He walks where the weak and
heartless won't dare,
And if by chance he should stumble
and lose control,
His brothers will be there, to help
reach his goal,
For a worthy brother, no need is
too great,
He need not but ask, fulfillment's
his fate.
For an Aryan brother, death holds
no fear,
Vengeance will be his, through his
brothers still here.

By 1975, the gang had expanded into most of California's state prisons and was engaged in what authorities describe as a full-fledged race war. Dozens had already been slain when, that same year, a fish named Michael Thompson entered the system. A twenty-three-year-old white former high-school football star, he had been sentenced for helping to murder two drug dealers and burying their bodies in a lime-filled pit in a back yard. Six feet four and weighing nearly three hundred pounds, he was strong enough to break ordinary shackles. He had brown hair, which was parted in the middle, and hypnotic blue eyes. Despite the violent nature of his crime, he had no other convictions and, with a chance for parole in less than a decade, he initially kept to himself, barely aware of the different forces moving around him. "I was a fish with gills out to fucking here," he later said.

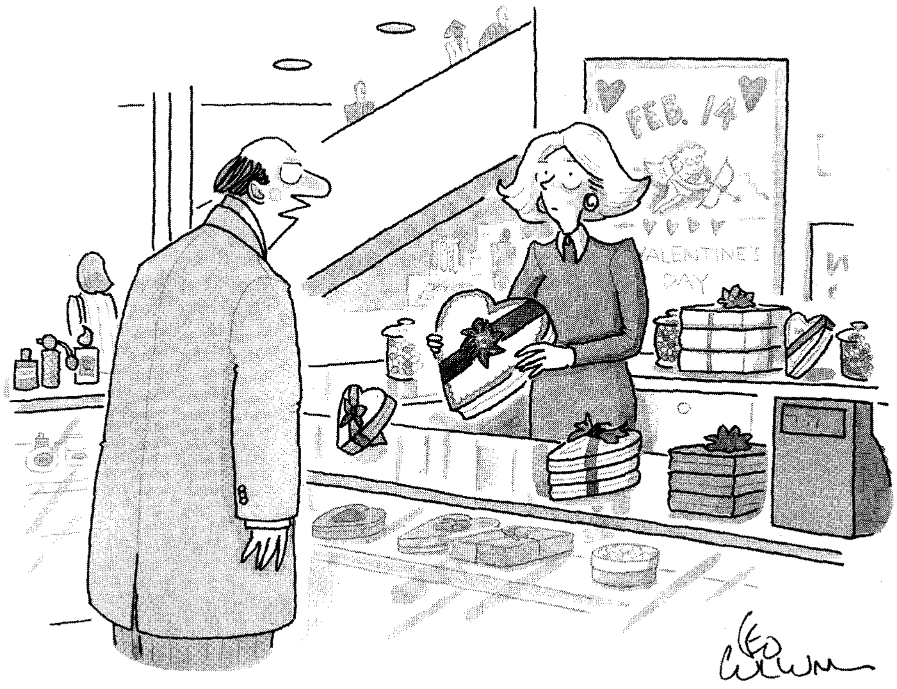
Unaligned with any of the emerging gangs, he was conspicuous prey for roaming Hispanic and black groups, and several of them soon assaulted him in the yard at a prison in Tracy, California; later, he was sent to Folsom, which, along with San Quentin, was exploding with gang wars. On his first day there, he says, no one spoke to him until a leader of the Black Guerrilla Family, a trim, angular man in shorts and a T-shirt, began to taunt him, telling him to come to the yard "ready" the next day. That night in his cell, Thompson recalled, he looked frantically for a weapon; he broke a piece of steel off his cell door and began to file its edges. It was at least ten inches long, and he sharpened both sides. Before the cell doors opened and the guards searched him, he said, he knew he needed to hide the weapon. He took off his clothes and tried to insert it in his rectum. "I couldn't," he recalled. "I was too ashamed." He tried again and again, until finally he succeeded.

The next morning in the yard, he could see the guards, the tips of their rifles glistening in the sun. The leader of the Black Guerrilla Family circled toward him, flashing a steel blade, and Thompson lay down, trying to extricate his weapon. Eventually, he got it and began to lunge violently at his foe; another gang member came at him and Thompson stabbed him, too. By the time the guards interceded, Thompson was covered in blood, and one of the members of the Black Guerrilla Family lay on the ground, near death.

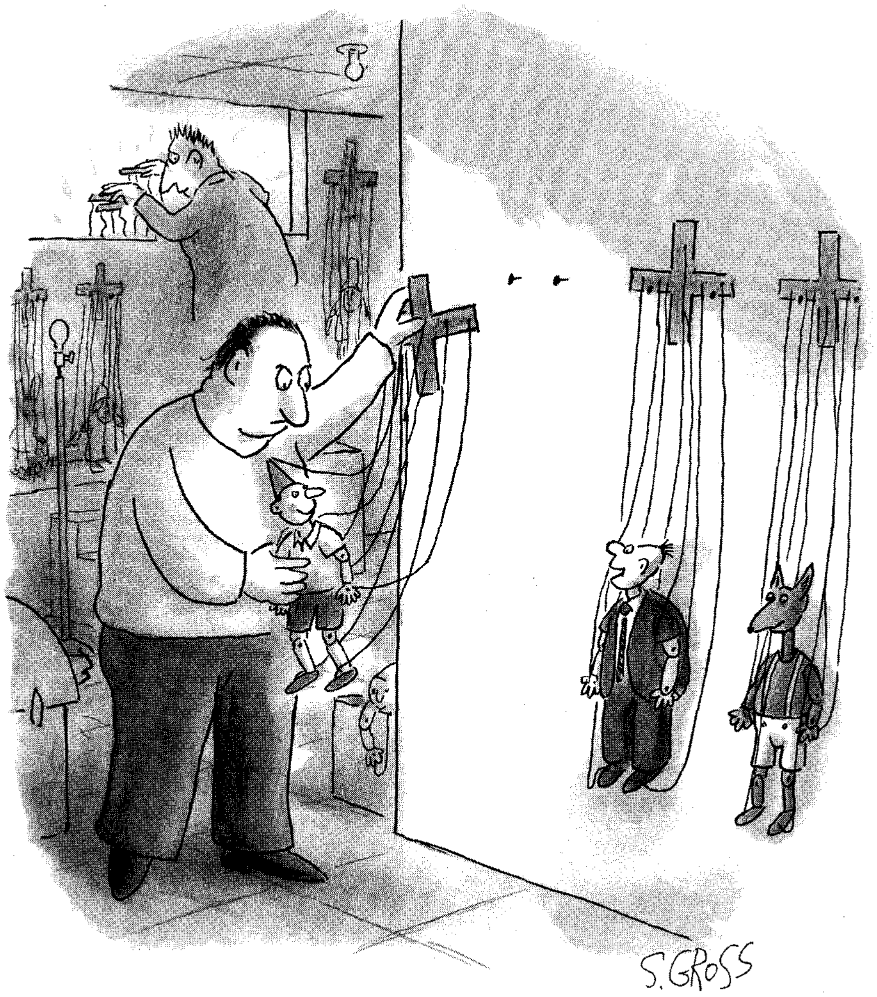
Not long after this incident, several white convicts approached him in the yard. "They wanted me to join the Brand," Thompson said. Initially, he hesitated, in part because of the gang's racism, but he knew that the group offered more than protection. "It was like being let into a sanctuary," he said. "You were instantly the man—the shot caller."

To be accepted, according to Thompson and to other gang members, each recruit had to "make his bones," which often meant killing another inmate. (One recruit told authorities in a sworn statement that the rite was intended to "create a lasting bond to the A.B. and also prove that he had what it takes.") Thompson also recited a "blood in, blood out" oath, in which he vowed not only that he would spill another's blood to get in but also that he would never leave the gang unless his own blood was fatally spilled. While many new members had a probationary period, which often lasted as long as a year, Thompson, because of his physical strength and his ability with a knife, was voted into the gang almost immediately. He was "branded" with a homemade tattoo gun (which inmates made out of a beard trimmer sold at the commissary, a guitar string, a pen, and a needle stolen from the infirmary). Sometimes members were tattooed with the letters "A.B." or the numerals 666, symbolizing the beast, a manifestation of evil in the Revelation of St. John. On Thompson's left hand, just above one of his knuckles, he received the most recognizable symbol: a green shamrock. "All I had to do was show that 'rock and I was in charge," he said.

He was moved from one state prison to the next, often for disciplinary reasons, but these transfers only helped him garner more influence, and he gradually



"I won't need a bag. I'll eat it here."



*"You're on, kid. Break a string!"*

• •

rose through the Brotherhood's rarefied ranks. He met Barry Mills, a.k.a. the Baron, who had initially been incarcerated for stealing a car and became the gang's vanguard member, seemingly concentrating all his energies not on returning to the outside world but on remaining in the inside world, where he was, in the words of Thompson, "the hog with the biggest balls." And he met T. D. Bingham, a charismatic bank robber who was nearly as wide as he was tall and who could bench-press five hundred pounds. Nicknamed the Hulk and Super Honkey, he spoke in a folksy manner that concealed a burning intelligence, friends say. In photographs from the time, he has a black walrus mustache and a ski hat pulled down over his eyebrows. Part Jewish, he wore a Star of David tattooed on one arm and, without any apparent irony, a swastika on the other. Once, when he testified on behalf of another reputed Aryan Brotherhood inmate, he told the jury, "There's a code in every segment of society. . . . Well, we have a different kind of moral and ethical code." He later added, "It's a lot more primordial." One of his friends, referring to his propensity for violence, told me, "Sometimes he got the urge, you know what I mean? He got the urge."

Thompson soon became acquainted with the Brotherhood's inner sanctum. There was Thomas Silverstein, a talented artist with long flowing hair who, a counsellor noted in his prison file, "seems to be easily influenced by these men and is eager to please them." After shedding an enemy's blood with a handcrafted knife, he would often retire to his cell and draw elaborate portraits. One ink sketch showed a man in a cell with a claw reaching down toward him. Thompson also met Dallas Scott, a drug addict who once told the reporter Pete Earley, in the 1992 book "The Hot House: Life Inside Leavenworth Prison," "In your society I may not be anybody, but in here I am"; and Clifford Smith, who lost an eye after a black-widow spider bit him at San Quentin and who, when asked to carry out his first hit, said, "Yeah, bro, I'll do the bastard."

Thompson, who had only a high-school education, was being tailored for leadership. He was given many books, a curriculum that formed a kind of world view. He read Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" and Machiavelli's "The Prince." He read Nietzsche, memorizing his aphorisms. ("One should die proudly when it is no longer possible to live proudly.") And he read Louis L'Amour, whose pulp novels about romantic gunslingers who ride for "the brand" inspired the gang's nickname. "It was like you went to school," Thompson said. "You already hate the system, hate the establishment, because you're in jail, you're buried, and you start to think of yourself as this noble warrior—and that's what we called each other, warriors. It was like I was a soldier going out to battle."

Thompson said that, like other new members, he was trained to kill without blinking, without reservation. One A.B. instruction manual, which was seized by authorities, stated, "The smell of fresh human blood can be overpowering but killing is like having sex. The first time is not so rewarding, but it gets better and better with practice, especially when one remembers that it's a holy cause." During a confidential debriefing with prison officials, one Aryan brother described how members studied anatomy texts, so "that when they stab somebody it was a killshot."

In 1981, according to prison records, Thompson approached one of the gang's enemies "from behind and began stabbing him," and "continued" striking his victim "as he lay on the floor." Thompson once wrote in a letter, "Knife fighting, at its best, is like a dance. Under ideal conditions, the objective is to bleed your opponent—cutting hands, wrist, and arms and as the opponent weakens from blood loss, inflicting further damage to the face (eyes) and torso."

Inmates were frequently killing each other not because of any actual slight but because of the color of their skin. In one incident, Silverstein and an A.B. associate, Clayton Fountain, who, according to a friend, was eager to "make his bones," stabbed a leader of the rival gang D.C. Blacks sixty-seven times in the shower, then dragged his bloody corpse through the tiers while other white inmates chanted racial slurs. After Silverstein was charged with murdering another inmate, he boasted in court, "I have walked over dead bodies. I've had guts splattered all over my chest from race wars."

To try to rein the Brand in, prison officials, in desperation, had begun to place its members throughout the correctional system. (No inmate would publicly admit being in the gang, and, when asked under oath, would typically say, "Sir, I will not answer a question like that.") The dispersal measures, however, only spread the Brand's reach to penitentiaries in Texas and Illinois and Kansas, and still farther east, to Pennsylvania and Georgia. A once classified 1982 F.B.I. report warned that leaders were "recruiting for the A.B., only now they had the entire country to pick from." One letter from a gang member, which was obtained by Texas prison sociologists, said, "All members shipped from here last week have written back and it looks like the family is in the process of growing." Another stated, "We are growing like a cancer."

Upon entering a new prison, Brand members would often carry out a "demonstration" killing or stabbing, in order to terrorize the inmate population. The Baron reportedly ordered that one foe be "taken out in front of everyone, to let these motherfuckers know we mean business." Indeed, rather than conceal its murders, the gang flaunted them even in front of the guards, as if to show it had no fear of repercussions, of being shot or sentenced to life without parole. "We wanted people to think we were a little crazy," Thompson said. "It was a way, like Nietzsche said, of bending space and reality to our will."

On a Saturday morning in the fall of 1983, at Marion federal prison, in southern Illinois, Thomas Silverstein waited for guards to take him for a routine shower. Marion, which is about a hundred miles southeast of St. Louis, was opened in 1963, the year that Alcatraz closed, and was designed to cope with the profusion of violent gang members—in particular, men like Silverstein, who by then had been convicted of murdering three inmates and had earned the nickname Terrible Tom (as he often signed his letters, with looping strokes).

Before taking Silverstein to the bathroom, the guards frisked him, to make sure he hadn't fashioned any weapons. (He often had pens and other sketching tools for his art work.) They also shackled his wrists. Three guards surrounded him, one of whom was a hard-nosed, nineteen-year veteran with military-style gray hair named Merle Clutts. Clutts, who was to retire in a few months, was perhaps the only guard in the unit who didn't fear Silverstein; he once reportedly told him, "Hey, *I'm* running this shit. You ain't running it."

As the guards escorted Silverstein through the prison, he paused outside the cell of another gang member—who, as planned, suddenly reached between the bars and, with a handcuff key, unlocked Silverstein's shackles. Silverstein pulled a nearly foot-long knife from his conspirator's waistband. "This is between me and Clutts," Silverstein hollered as he rushed toward him.

One of the other guards screamed, "He's got a shank!" But Clutts was already cornered, without a weapon. He raised his hands while Silverstein stabbed him in the stomach. "He was just sticking Officer Clutts with that knife," another guard later recalled. "He was just sticking and sticking and sticking." By the time Silverstein relinquished the knife—"The man disrespected me," he told the guards. "I *had* to get him"—Clutts had been stabbed forty times. He died shortly afterward.

A few hours later, Clayton Fountain, Silverstein's close friend, was being led through the prison when he paused by another inmate's cell. In an instant, he, too, was free. "You motherfuckers want a piece of this?" he yelled, waving a blade. He stabbed three more guards. One died in the arms of his son, who also worked in the prison. Fountain reportedly said that he didn't want Silverstein to have a higher body count.

It was the first time in the history of American federal prisons that two guards had been killed on the same day. "You got to understand," Thompson said. "Here were guys in restraints, locked in the Hole in the most secure prison, and they were still able to get to the guards. It sent a simple message: We can get to you anywhere, anytime."

As the gang's reputation for brutality was growing, so, too, were its ranks. Although the Brand continued to permit only a select few to become "made" members, it had thousands of followers, known as "peckerwoods," who sought out the perks of being associated with it: permanent protection, free contraband, better prison jobs (which were often dictated by trusty inmates who did whatever the gang demanded). As Thompson put it, "The guards controlled the perimeter of the prison and we controlled what happened inside it." But as the number of gang members, associates, and hangers-on swelled, managing the organization grew increasingly difficult.

When the Brotherhood was in its infancy, every member had an equal vote on critical matters; by the early eighties, this policy was creating chaos. In a previously undisclosed briefing, Clifford Smith told authorities, "We used to be one man one vote, included damn near everything. I mean, damn near everything. Somebody getting in, whacking somebody . . . You damn near had to have the whole state's okay. . . . You had to send some kites"—notes—"and runners and lawyers and this and that. It always got tipped off by the time we got back to you and said, 'Yeah, dump the guy.' . . . You can't have someone in the yard that you want to bump and let them be out there for two or three weeks." Smith said the gang members were becoming "like twelve horses teamed to one wagon, with each of them going in a different direction." An internal report at the time by the California Department of Corrections went so far as to predict that "the A.B. will probably not propose a serious threat to law enforcement agencies in the future unless it gains a clear and well enforced chain of command."

Thompson started to push for just that. "I wanted to eliminate the irrationality and make it into a true organized-crime family," he said. "I wasn't interested in killing blacks. I was interested in only one thing: power."

He and other leaders hatched a plan with gang members who were incarcerated at a prison in Chino, in Southern

California. These men, who were awaiting trials for the assaults or murders of fellow-inmates, were encouraged to represent themselves as attorneys, thereby allowing them to subpoena their colleagues around the country as witnesses. Each time a Brand member sent out a "writ," another member would have to be relocated to Chino. For several days, using what one member called "subpoena power unlimited" and exploiting the very legal system that was trying to stop them, most of the Brand was able to meet for hours in the yard, in what amounted to a private convention.

As Smith recalled, "We all get over in the corner one day and say, 'Damn, man, check this out, we got all the power right here. Let's take this one step further.' " The Brand's California leaders decided to establish a chain of command modelled loosely on the structure of the Italian Mafia. A council of about a dozen members would manage gang operations throughout the state prison system. Each council member would be elected by majority vote. He would be responsible for enforcing all of the gang's policies, which would now be codified; he also could authorize a hit at any moment, as long as it wasn't on a fellow A.B. member. The council's actions would be overseen by a three-man commission. Authorities say that Thompson and Smith served on the California council. In the federal prison system, where the gang set up a similar hierarchy in roughly a dozen maximum-security prisons, the Baron and T. D. Bingham allegedly became high commissioners.

The A.B.'s new structure strengthened its grip, but there remained one outstanding obstacle: snitches. Though other crime families had to worry about members "rolling over," in prison everyone had an incentive to "flip," and all an inmate had to do was whisper in a guard's ear. In the early nineteen-eighties, a former gang member, Steven Barnes, had testified in a murder rap against one of the new commissioners and was housed in protective custody, where no one could get to him. In response, the Aryan Brotherhood settled upon a new policy: If it couldn't get to you, it would get to your family. "What we wanted to do was hit . . . Barnes's wife," Smith explained. "If we couldn't get to her, we'd move then to his brother . . . or sister and from there we'd work our way down the list. . . . That was policy that we'd established that we'd do from then on."

To carry out its new policy, Brand leaders needed to find a hit man, someone who could, in the words of the gang, "step up." And so they allegedly turned to Curtis Price, a forty-one-year-old made A.B. member who was about to be paroled from Chino prison, and who would, according to a former gang member, "kill as to directions received from the A.B. council." Described by his parole officer as "one of the most dangerous state prisoners I've dealt with in my twenty-two years" of service, Price was six feet tall, with short brown hair and vacant blue eyes. In photographs, the bones around his pallid face protrude and give him a slightly ghostly air. Price, who had once expressed hope of going into law enforcement, had in more recent years stabbed another inmate and taken two guards hostage, telling one, "I'll blow your partner's head off."

Court and prison records reveal that upon his release, on September 14, 1982, Price met a twenty-two-year-old mother of two children named Elizabeth Hickey and stole several weapons from her stepfather's house, including a twelve-gauge shotgun and a Mauser automatic. Price then drove to the home of Steven Barnes's father, Richard, in Temple City, California, and shot him three times in the head, execution style. Barnes's neighbors found him lying on his bed, face down, his cowboy hat resting nearby.

Afterward, Price returned to Elizabeth Hickey's home and beat her to death, crushing her skull in five places, in an apparent attempt to eliminate her as a potential witness. He then bought a ticket to see the movie "Gandhi." The gang soon received a postcard in prison. It said, "Business has been taken care of."

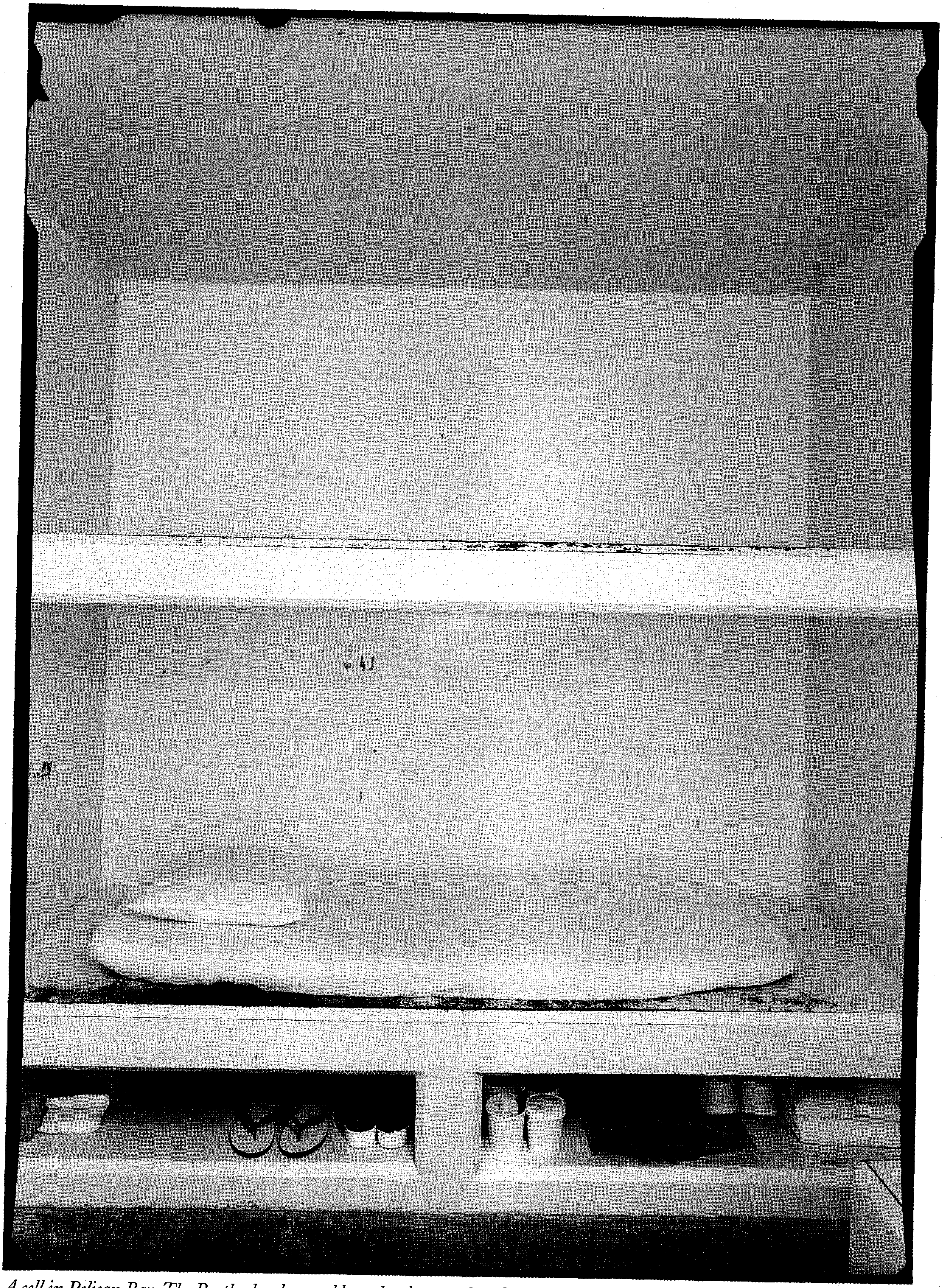
One day not long ago, I tried to find Michael Thompson. I had been told that he had mysteriously dropped out of the Aryan Brotherhood shortly after the Barnes killing, and had testified against Price, who, in 1986, was convicted of the two murders. Thompson became the highest-ranking defector in the gang's history. ("He's big, he's tough, he's mean, he's killed, and then all of a sudden he's gone, just rolled over," one A.B. associate said in disbelief.) Thompson was thought to have as many death threats made against him as anyone in prison; his family had been relocated, and he was being held in the correctional system's version of the witness-protection program. He was moved from prison to prison anonymously, and was often kept in a protective-custody unit, walled off from most inmates.

After weeks of searching, I called the prison where I had heard Thompson was incarcerated. The authorities insisted that there was no one there by that name. Moments later, I received a call from a law-enforcement official who knew I was trying to find Thompson. "They think you're trying to kill him," she said. "They're moving him out of the prison right now."

After explaining to officials why I wanted to speak with Thompson, I was able to get a letter to him, and, with his agreement, I headed to the maximum-security prison where he was being held under the name of "Occupant." To get inside the prison, I had to submit my car to a search, and I was given a checkered shirt to replace my blue oxford, which happened to match the color of some inmate uniforms and was therefore forbidden. There were several children with their mothers filing in alongside me; they wore white dresses or neatly pleated pants, as if they were attending church.

We passed through several steel gates, each door clanking loudly behind us, before reaching a brightly lit room filled with wooden chairs and tables. While the other visitors were allowed to sit freely with inmates, I was led to the back of the room, where a three-foot-by-three-foot bulletproof window was cut into the wall. A chair was placed in front of it, and I sat down and peered through the scuffed plastic. I could see a small cement cell, with a telephone and a chair. The room was sealed on all sides except for a steel door at the opposite end. A moment later, the door clicked open and Thompson, a giant of a man, appeared in a white prison jumpsuit with his hands shackled behind his back. As a guard removed his chains, Thompson bent forward and I could see his face. It was covered with a hermit-like beard. His hair reached to his shoulders and was parted down the middle, in the style that was fashionable in the seventies, when he was first convicted of murder. As he came

DAN WINTERS



*A cell in Pelican Bay. The Brotherhood was able to develop murder schemes even under maximum security.*

closer to the glass, I could see, amid the thickets of graying hair, his bright-blue eyes. He sat down and reached for the phone, and I picked up mine.

"How was your trip?" he asked.

He spoke in a soft, courteous voice. I asked him why he had dropped out of the Brand, and he said he made his decision after the debate over whether to kill Steven Barnes's father and other family members. "I argued with them for days," he said. "I kept saying, 'We're warriors, aren't we? We don't kill children. We don't kill mothers and fathers.' But I lost. And they killed him, execution style, and then they killed Hickey, an innocent woman, just because she knew where Price had gotten the gun. And that's when I walked away. That's when I said, 'This thing is out of control.' " He leaned toward the window, his breath steaming the glass. "I am still willing to fight someone in here, head up, if I have to. That's the culture of where I live. But I was not for killing people on the outside, people in your world."

When I asked him what he initially found compelling about the gang, he paused for a long moment. "That's a very good question," he said. There was the protection, he suggested, ticking off the reasons. There was the sense of belonging. But that wasn't really it. For him, at least, he said, it was the rush of power. "I was naïve, because I saw us as these noble warriors," he said. In the eighties, he added, he had tried to change the nature of the gang. "I thought that by organizing we could make the gang less bloody. I thought we could strip away the irrational killings. But I was foolish, because at some level you could never remove that. And the structure only allowed the gang to be more deadly."

During our conversation, Thompson cited various philosophers, including Nietzsche, whose "true genius," he later wrote me in a letter, "the gang often misinterprets." It was hard to reconcile this cerebral figure with a man who said he had once helped to stab sixteen men in a single day. But, when I asked him about his training, he reached out with his hand and began, in almost clinical fashion, to show how to assassinate someone. "You can do it here on the right side of the heart, in the aorta, or here in the neck, or back here in the spine, which will paralyze someone," he said, moving his hand back and forth, as if slicing something. "I've been in jail thirty years now, and I know I am probably never going to get out. I am a dangerous person. I don't like violence, but I am good at it."

He had tried, he said, to isolate himself from other prisoners. "I don't go in the yard much," he said. "It's not safe." He said the only people he could really interact with were the guards, for fear of being recognized. "In here, I am lower than child killers and child molesters. Because I defected from the A.B., I am the lowest there is."

The gang had tried several times to get to him; after he was placed in the protective-custody unit, he said, the Brand sent in a "sleeper"—a secret collaborator—who had tried to stab him. "You need to understand one thing," Thompson said. "The Aryan Brotherhood is not about white supremacy. It is about supremacy. And it will do anything to get it. Anything."

A guard banged on the door. "I have to go now," he said.

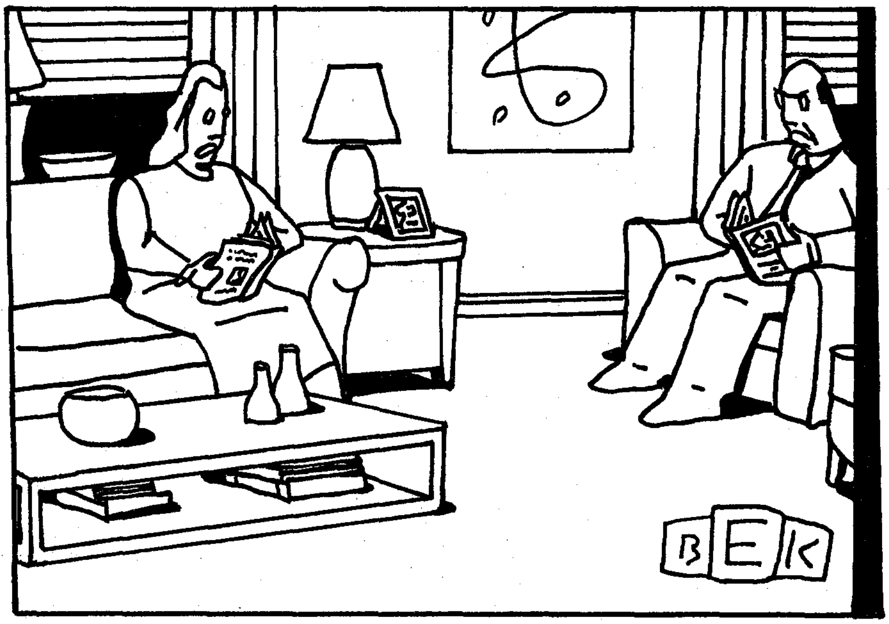
As he stood, he pressed his hand against the glass, and I could see something green on his left hand. I looked closer: it was the faint outline of a shamrock. Armed with that tattoo, Thompson had told me, a man could take over an entire United States penitentiary.

In the fall of 1994, a bus filled with prisoners arrived at Leavenworth, Kansas, a maximum-security federal prison built almost a century ago. Out stepped a tall muscular man with a black mustache. His arms were covered with tattoos, and he soon appeared in the yard without a shirt, revealing a large shamrock in the middle of his chest. He was immediately surrounded by a group of white inmates. Many went to the commissary and paid to have their photograph taken with him, which they carried around like passports. "If you . . . were able to show that picture, it was just like standing next to your favorite pop star," one prisoner said.

The man's name was Michael McElhiney, but everyone called him Mac. A reputed A.B. member, he had just come from Marion, where he had been housed with Barry Mills, the notorious Baron. Mills, who later testified in court on McElhiney's behalf, said, "I look at him like a son."

McElhiney, a convicted methamphetamine dealer who had conspired to kill a witness, was so charismatic that, according to authorities, a juror once fell in love with him. However, in private letters, which were later confiscated by prison officials, Mac spoke openly of "the beast" inside him and referred to himself proudly as "an angry motherfucker." An F.B.I. agent at Leavenworth described him as probably "a psychopath," while a close friend put it this way: "He likes to have everybody know that he's God."

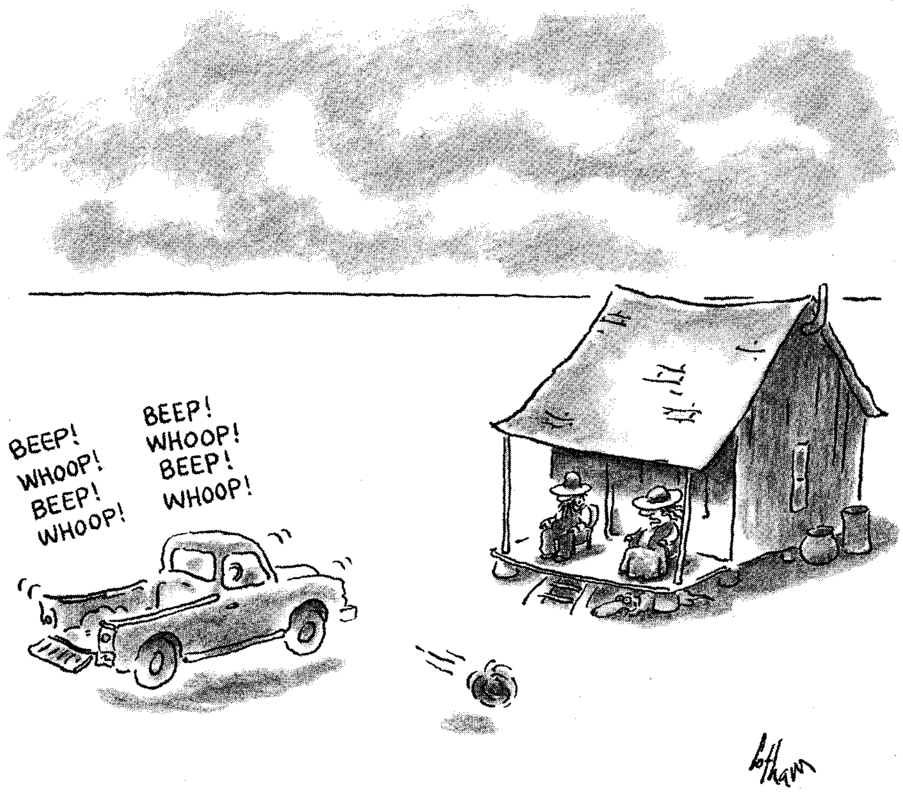
An Aryan Brotherhood presence had



*"I am just being hysterical, but I do hate you."*

long existed at Leavenworth, which was known as "the hothouse," because of its sweltering, catacomb-like cells. But McElhiney was determined to extend the gang's reach.

Although the Brand maintained remnants of its racist ideology, it had increasingly sought, according to a declassified F.B.I. report, "to launch a cooperative effort of death and fear against staff and other inmates . . . in order to take over the system." The Brand aimed, the F.B.I. warned, to control everything from drug trafficking to the sale of "punks"—inmates forced into prostitution—to extortion rackets to murder contracts behind bars. It sought, in short, to become a racketeering enterprise. The council member Clifford Smith had told authorities that the gang was no longer primarily "bent on destroying blacks and the Jews and the minorities of the world, white supremacy and all that shit. It's a criminal organization, first and foremost."


BEEP!
WHOOP!
BEEP!
WHOOP!
BEEP!
WHOOP!
BEEP!
WHOOP!
Shaw

*"The tumbleweed probably set it off."*

Using an array of white associates, who either coveted membership in the gang or needed protection, McElhiney set out to dominate Leavenworth's underground economy. His men went from tier to tier, demanding a tax from the sale of "pruno"—prison wine that could be brewed out of almost any cafeteria fruit (apples, strawberries, even ketchup). At the time, a man named Keith Segien was running a friendly poker game in the prison's B unit. One night on his way to his cell, Segien later testified in court, Mac was waiting for him. He told Segien to sit down.

Segien hesitated. "What's this about?" he asked.

"If I wanted you killed," Segien recalls him saying, "you'd have been dead by now." Then Mac added, "Someone told me you don't want me . . . to run the poker game, and I'm here to make money. I'm going to run the poker game." He asked if Segien had a problem with that.

"I said no," Segien testified. "That was the last day I ran the poker game."

Mac soon had gambling rackets operating in nearly every unit, on nearly every tier. As with the sale of pruno, inmates say, the guards often turned a blind eye, perhaps to mollify a seething population. Some guards, it seemed, had come to consider the Aryan Brotherhood presence as inevitable, and even used its leaders as surrogate power brokers. In one instance, a guard at Leavenworth went to McElhiney to get the O.K. before he released another prisoner in the yard. One longtime A.B. member compared the illicit operations in maximum-security prisons to bootlegging during Prohibition and to the high-roller tables in Las Vegas.

Currency is not allowed in prison, and inmates typically paid their smaller debts to the Brotherhood by offering free contraband or items from the commissary: cigarettes, candy, stamps, books. At the high-roller tables at Leavenworth, where imprisoned drug lords could place bets in the thousands of dollars, participants were allowed to play for a month on credit. The man in charge of the table kept a tally of wins and losses. At the end of the month, inmates say, Mac's men would collect the losses; usually, gamblers would pay up by having a relative or a friend send an untraceable money order to a designated A.B. person on the outside. If an indebted inmate didn't have the money mailed on time, internal prison records show, he was typically "piped"—beaten with a metal rod. McElhiney later acknowledged that he was funnelling the proceeds to his mentor Mills and to other reputed leaders of the Aryan Brotherhood, with whom he had "a pact" to take over the "gambling business."

McElhiney, who presided over the yard wearing sunglasses, his nails often stained yellow from chewing tobacco, then decided to focus on drug smuggling. In the past, the Brand had sought out almost anyone who could bring in its merchandise. In one instance, several inmates involved in a scheme told me, the gang offered to protect Charles Manson, and even conspired in a failed bid to help him escape; in return, Manson's cult of women on the outside helped to smuggle dope into prison for them.

According to authorities and court records, Mac now started to canvass the population for the most vulnerable inmates—those who were drug addicts or in debt to the gang or simply scared, and could therefore be forced to serve as "mules." One such person was Walter Moles, a drug user who was terrified of the gang. His father, who was terminally ill with emphysema, was planning to travel to Leavenworth to celebrate his son's birthday. According to Moles's later testimony, Mac instructed him to have his drug contact on the outside send Moles's father six balloons filled with heroin. Using coded language on the prison's tape-recorded pay phones, Moles then persuaded his father to transport the package.

Weeks later, when his father arrived, he sat beside Moles in the visiting room, under the guards' scrutiny. He carried the package in his underwear. Moles instructed his father to go into the bathroom, place two of the balloons in his mouth, then return and spit them into Moles's cup of coffee. His father said he couldn't do it. The heroin wasn't in six balloons. "It's in one big one," he said.

"How big?" Moles asked.

"A Ping-Pong ball."

Eventually, his father managed to drop the balloon into his son's coffee cup. Moles tried to swallow it, but it got stuck in his throat.

His father started to panic. "Son, just give it back to me," he begged. "I'll send it back to where it came from."

"No, Dad, I can't," he said. He explained that the heroin wasn't for himself. "These guys I'm bringing it in for want their stuff."

His father didn't seem to understand: Who were these people?

Moles saw a guard's attention wander, and said that he had to say goodbye.

"Is it the end of the visit?" his father asked.

"If I'm going to do it, this is my only chance," Moles said. While his father distracted the guard, Moles untucked his shirt and forced the drugs into his rectum. After he got past the guards, he said, he gave "the stuff" to one of Mac's henchmen.

The next morning, Moles waited behind the bleachers in the yard for his cut. Suddenly, he felt something hard against the back of his head, and he collapsed to the ground. "I tried to get up," Moles later testified, "but I kept getting kicked."

Mac's men told Moles to stay down.

"What did I do wrong?" Moles asked. "What did I do wrong?"

Afterward, when an A.B. associate asked Mac why he had assaulted Moles and taken his share of the dope, Mac reportedly replied, "Fuck the little punk."

## SOCCER MOMS

They remember Gene Chandler topping the charts with "Duke of Earl"
when the boys were set on taking the milk bar's one banquette
and winning their hearts, Mavis and Merle,

as it seemed their hearts might be first to yield,
hearts before minds. Time for stilettos. Time for spivs with shivs.
The time of day when light fails on the field

while their daughters, themselves now tweenie girls,
crowd round a coach for one last tête-à-tête.
They remember Gene Chandler topping the charts with "Duke of Earl"

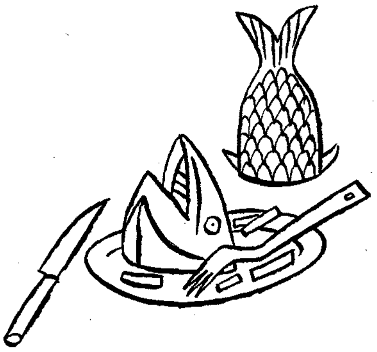
while the world still reeled
from the anti-Castro Cubans going to sea in a sieve,
as it seemed. Their hearts might be first to yield

if only after forty years of one plain, one purl,
on the sweater they've sweated over for a Bay of Pigs vet,
and winning their hearts, Mavis and Merle,

may now be faintly likelier for a well-heeled
schlub to whom they once wouldn't so much as give
the time of day. When light fails on the field

Heroin was now flooding into Leavenworth. According to authorities, inmates received more than twelve hundred positive tests for heroin during 1995. One prisoner estimated that forty per cent of the population was shooting up. "Heroin deadens everything," an inmate at Leavenworth said. "Speed, man, you're bebopping around and you're doing more time than you would normally because you ain't sleeping at night. . . . But the heroin, yeah . . . you're feeling no pain."

Because of the scarcity of supply and the unusually high demand in prison, authorities say, a gram of heroin that was bought on the street for sixty-five dollars was selling inside Leavenworth for as much as a thousand dollars. A former council member told me that the gang was bringing in anywhere from half a million to a million dollars a year from a single prison. As one F.B.I. agent put it, "You just do the math."



With his empire expanding by the day, Mac seemed more and more "out of control," as one former ally said. Although A.B. leaders were forbidden, under gang rules, to use heroin themselves, associates say that Mac would hole up in his cell with "a rig"—a homemade syringe typically constructed out of a needle stolen from the infirmary and a hollowed-out ballpoint pen. There, in what inmates describe as a heroin-induced haze, he would allegedly sit with A.B. henchmen and mete out his own form of justice, including murder.

McElhiney eventually became convinced that a snitch was trolling for evidence against him. Then one day, associates say, Mac sent word to his men that he had found the rat: Bubba Leger, a trusted associate who did most of the A.B.'s tattoo work and who only a few months earlier had posed proudly next to Mac for a photograph. In the rec cage one day, according to witnesses, one of Mac's

a schlubster linesman will unfurl
an offside flag that signals some vague threat,
they remember. Gene Chandler topping the charts with "Duke of Earl"

for three weeks only in 1962 might have taught them to shield
themselves against the lives their daughters briefly relive,
as it seemed *their* hearts might be first to yield

to this free kick that forever curls
past the goal mouth, a ball at once winging into the back of the net
*and* winning. Their hearts, Mavis and Merle,

hanker for the time when it was not yet revealed
failure's no less literal than figurative,
the time of day when light fails on the field

and gives back a sky more muddy than mother-of-pearl,
so it's with a deepening sense of regret
they remember Gene Chandler topping the charts with "Duke of Earl"
and winning their hearts, Mavis and Merle.

—*Paul Muldoon*

associates nicknamed Ziggy, who was purportedly eager to make his bones, pulled out a knife and started stabbing Bubba. "Why you doing this?" Bubba pleaded. With blood flowing from his chest, Bubba stumbled over to the steel door of the cage and pounded on it, trying to get the guards' attention. In full view of the guards, Ziggy stabbed Bubba at least five more times. Bubba died moments later.

It was then, witnesses say, that they saw one of Mac's men take another weapon, a sharpened toothbrush, and plant it near Bubba to make it look as though he had used it first. Afterward, McElhiney was said to have enforced a long-standing Aryan Brotherhood policy, which required all witnesses to perjure themselves. " 'I'm going to give you a choice,' " an associate said that McElhiney told him. " 'You can either lie or die on this one.' " In a note, McElhiney, who shaved his head after the murder, instructed Ziggy what to do: "The defense you're going to have is self-defense." He went on, "Hang tough, Stud. As soon as you get a lawyer direct him to me without further ado. . . . Got it? Stress to him that it's a must he come see me 'fore you trust him—Our code word will be Mary Mary Quite Contrary."

Ziggy received a twenty-seven-year sentence and later appeared with a tattoo of a shamrock on his leg, but authorities were never able to prove that McElhiney had ordered the killing (though they did later convict him for smuggling drugs). During the investigation, one unexpected fact emerged: Bubba had not been a snitch after all.

"This isn't in the job description," Gregory Jessner said. The Assistant United States Attorney was standing on a loading dock outside the Los Angeles federal courthouse, stacking onto an old wooden dolly boxes of transcripts for his case against the Aryan Brotherhood. There were thirteen in all, and as he worked a small circle of sweat appeared on his starched white shirt. The son of a mathematician, he had a slightly cerebral air. "I don't really have a bulldog persona," he said. "I'm not like Marcia Clark." He had never read a John Grisham novel, and was known to pick up books by Cervantes and David Foster Wallace between trials.

After he wheeled the boxes upstairs, occasionally bumping into walls and doors, he arranged them on a long wooden conference table, and caught his breath. Then he said, "These deal with just one murder in the indictment. It's nothing."

Jessner had started investigating the gang in 1992. A convicted murderer was found strangled in his cell at a federal prison in Lompoc, California, and Jessner was assigned the case. Law-enforcement officials often dismiss such crimes as N.H.I.s—"No humans involved"—because the victims are considered to be as unsympathetic as the perps. Trying to break through a web of perjury, Jessner located several witnesses who claimed that the A.B. had murdered a fellow gang member for, among other things, falling in love with a gay prisoner. Although the Brotherhood had a long history of trafficking in "punks," and although some of its members were known to receive sexual favors in return for protection, the gang considered open homosexuality a sign of weakness, a violation of the A.B. code. "The member made the mistake of kissing on the stairs," Jessner said.

Jessner was able to prove that an A.B. recruit had gone into his associate's cell, tied a bedsheet around his neck, and strangled him while an accomplice held his legs. Yet Jessner realized that he had done little to impede the gang; as with previous isolated prosecutions, he may have only strengthened it. The recruit was later said to have hung a photograph of his target on his cell wall, like an honorary plaque, and held a celebration with pruno on the anniversary of the murder.

As Jessner dug deeper into this violent subculture, he learned that there were no definitive statistics on A.B. crimes, because so few of them were prosecuted—and because so many associates from other gangs, including the Dirty White Boys and the Mexican Mafia, did its bidding. More general statistics on inmate violence provided a glimpse of what one sociologist once described as "the upsurge of rapacious and murderous groups" inside American prisons. According to the most recent Justice Department census, fifty-one inmates were murdered in prisons in 2000. Moreover, there were more than thirty-four thousand reported assaults by inmates on other inmates, and nearly eighteen thousand on staff. Rape is common; one study of prisons in four states estimated that at least one in five inmates has been sexually assaulted.

Jessner eventually started to dig into hundreds of violent crimes linked to the Aryan Brotherhood. Working with an officer from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms named Mike Halualani—a half-Japanese, half-Hawaiian agent who was as brash as Jessner was genteel—Jessner attempted to devise a strategy to break the gang's stranglehold. But the more he investigated the more it seemed that the gang defied any conventional notion of a prosecution. Jessner told me that he kept asking himself, "How do you stop people who see a murder rap as a badge of honor? How do you stop people who have already been stopped by the law and sentenced to life imprisonment?"

By the nineteen-nineties, authorities, hoping to create at least some deterrent, and to protect other inmates, had relocated nearly all the Aryan Brotherhood's top leaders, including the Baron, to what were then a new breed of prisons, called "supermaxes." These prisoners were held in single cells, locked down nearly the entire day, without, as one gang member put it, "seeing fresh earth, plant life, or unfiltered sunlight"; they exercised alone in an indoor cage, were fed meals through a tray slot, and had little, if any, human contact.

In the case of Silverstein, who was already serving multiple life sentences when he killed the guard Clutts, in 1983, the Bureau of Prisons had established a separate unit for him at Leavenworth, where he was held in a Hannibal Lecter-style cage. Though Silverstein continued to sketch, he was for years not permitted to have a comb or a hairbrush, and when the reporter Pete Earley visited him, in the late eighties, he had long wild hair and a beard. "They want me to go crazy," he told Earley. "They want to point their fingers at me and say, 'See, see, we told you he is a lunatic.' . . . I didn't come in here a killer, but in here you learn hate. The insanity in here is cultivated by the guards. They feed the beast that lingers within all of us. . . . I find myself smiling at the thought of me killing Clutts each time they deny me a phone call, a visit, or keep the lights on. I find it harder and harder to repent and ask for forgiveness, because deep inside I can feel that hatred and anger growing."

Jessner told me, "Within the gang's lore, Silverstein has become its Christ figure."

Even under these conditions, which some civil-rights groups considered a violation of human rights, the Aryan Brotherhood continued to flourish. Its members developed elaborate ways to communicate. They dropped notes through pipes that were connected to nearby cells; they tapped Morse code on prison bars; they forced orderlies to pass kites; they whispered through vents in "carnie," a convoluted, rhyming code language. ("Bottle stoppers" meant "coppers.") In addition, the leaders had developed a devoted coterie of women on the outside who had fallen in love with them through visits and correspondence and could serve as couriers, relaying messages back and forth between members. One woman who coöperated in the gang's illegal businesses later claimed she had Stockholm syndrome.

With the help of prison authorities, Jessner began to intercept a series of covert messages. Portions of the letters appeared to be blank, as if someone had been interrupted. After analysts applied heat with an iron and placed the paper under ultraviolet light, letters would appear, revealing "a secret message," as the F.B.I. wrote in an internal report. Cryptographers analyzed the "ink" of one such note, and discovered that the message was written with urine. The message itself was baffling; it had been scrambled into a code. "They have certain words that mean a certain thing," one former member said. "If they tell you that 'somebody's going to build a house in the country,' the prevalent word . . . is 'country,' because . . . that means 'murder.' "

Jessner and his team spent hours breaking sentences apart and reconstructing them. He started to see patterns in the messages: "baby boy" meant yes, and "baby girl" meant no. One day, prison authorities intercepted a note sent by T. D. Bingham, the A.B. commissioner, to the Baron. It said, "Well I am a grandfather, at last my boy's wife gave birth to a strapping eight pound seven ounce baby boy." Jessner feared that the reference to the baby's weight was code for 187, the California legal statute pertaining to murder; the fact that the baby was a boy suggested that a hit had been approved. Then analysts noticed that several of the letters had squiggly marks, almost like tails, on them. The words "eight pound," for instance, had curlicues on the letters "e," "g," "n," and "d." It appeared to be a code within a code.

After scrutinizing the letters, authorities determined that the note was in fact written in a biliteral cipher, a method invented by Sir Francis Bacon, the seventeenth-century philosopher. It involved using two distinct alphabets, depending on how the letters were drawn. An unadorned "c" referred to alphabet A, whereas a curlicued "c" represented alphabet B. Investigators went through the note, categorizing each letter by alphabet until they had a cluster of letters that all seemed to be a play on the initials of the Aryan Brotherhood:

> bbbaaaaabbabaaabababbabaaababaaabaaabbbababbaabbaaabbaabbabbbaabb . . .

It still made no sense. But after analysts broke the letters into clusters of five, Jessner says, they started to realize that each cluster represented an individual letter. Thus "ababb" was an "A," "abbab" was a "B," and so on. They had finally cracked the code; now they went through the letter again. It said:

> Confirm message from Chris to move on DC.

Officials knew that "DC" meant the D.C. Blacks, a prison gang against whom the Aryan Brotherhood had recently declared war. But, by the time authorities decoded the letter, two black inmates had been found dead in their cells in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: one was stabbed thirty-four times, the other thirty-five.

The Brotherhood began developing murder schemes that could succeed even in maximum-security environments. They started to befriend their foes, so they could one day "rock them to sleep." At Pelican Bay, where friends could apply to be cellmates, they sought to room with the very men they wanted to kill.

"Deception was key," one member who strangled his cellmate acknowledged. Between 1996 and 1998, A.B. members at Pelican Bay murdered three inmates, and were suspected in at least three additional slayings.

In many cases, officials in the correctional system seemed powerless to stop the gang. At Folsom prison, after A.B. leaders were sequestered from the general population, the gang's associates protested by indiscriminately stabbing rapists and child molesters until the leaders were released. A few prison officials actually facilitated the Brotherhood's activities. At the supermax prison in Colorado, a guard was accused of becoming an Aryan Brotherhood disciple; at Pelican Bay, two guards were discovered encouraging the beatings of child molesters and sex offenders by gang members. A local prosecutor warned that officials at Pelican Bay were unable to stop a "reign of terror."

By the mid-nineties, Jessner says, the gang had evolved to the point that it had to appoint members to lead different branches of its operations—such as the "department of security" and the "department of narcotics." Though the Aryan Brotherhood's profits never rivalled those of the Italian Mafia or outside drug lords, its reputation for violence did. The gang had some of the most highly trained and ruthless hit men in the country. And inside the prison system the Baron had so grown in stature that he overshadowed the imprisoned head of the Italian Mafia, John Gotti. According to authorities, in July, 1996, after a black inmate attacked Gotti at Marion prison, bloodying his face, the Mafia leader, who seemed ill prepared for the explosion of prison violence, sought the Baron's help in murdering his assailant. The Brotherhood seemed receptive to the idea—the Baron allegedly used sign language to communicate the price of the hit to an associate—but Gotti died before the hit could be executed.

It was around then that Jessner decided that the only way to take down the gang was the way authorities had taken down the Italian Mafia—by using the RICO statutes, which allowed the government to attack the entire hierarchy of a criminal organization rather than just one or two members. The goal, as Halualani put it, was to "cut off the head, not just the body."

In an audacious move, Jessner decided to pursue the death penalty for nearly all the gang's top leaders. "It's the only arrow left in our quiver," he told me. "I think even a lot of people who are against the death penalty in general would recognize that in this particular instance, where people are committing murder repeatedly from behind bars, there is little other option."

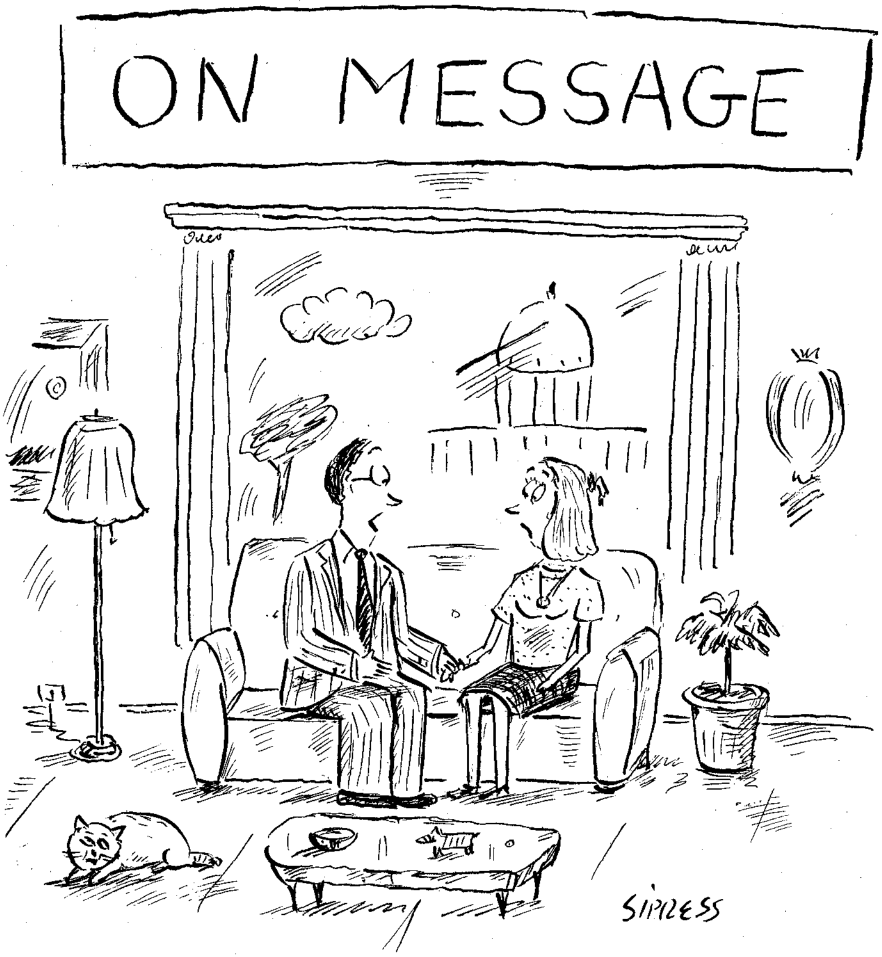
While Jessner was slowly trying to build a case, methodically flipping witnesses, decoding messages, and gathering forensic evidence, he had to be careful of "sleepers"—gang members pretending to coöperate with authorities in order to infiltrate the investigation. During a previous F.B.I. probe, agents reported that they were concerned that one snitch may "have in fact been a ploy by the A.B. to infiltrate the WITSEC program"—the witness-protection program—"and determine where all the government witnesses were housed."

As the Brotherhood grew stronger, it developed ambitions that extended beyond prison walls. Though many leaders were serving life sentences without parole, some members were being paroled—an outcome that authorities had long feared. "Most of the A.B. will be paroled or discharged at some future date and, in view of members' lifelong commitments, it would be naïve to think he would not remain in contact with his brothers," a declassified F.B.I. report stated. "The rule of thumb is that once on the streets, one must take care of his brothers that are still inside. The penalty for failure to do so is death upon the member's return to the prison system." Given the gang's ability to operate behind bars, the F.B.I. report warned of "what these gang members can do with little or no supervision." Silverstein himself has said, "Someday most of us finally get out of this hell and even a rational dog after getting kicked around year after year after year attacks when his cage door is finally opened."

On March 24, 1995, the door at Pelican Bay finally opened for Robert Scully, a reputed A.B. member and armed robber who had spent, with the exception of a few months, the previous thirteen years behind bars—many of them inside the Hole. For an Aryan brother, he was small: barely five feet four, and a hundred and forty-five pounds. But the thirty-six-year-old was known to work out obsessively in his cell, doing an endless routine of what the gang called "burpees"—standing one moment, then dropping to the floor to do a pushup, then hopping to one's feet again.

Brenda Moore, a lonely thirty-eight-

*"Honey—this is sooooooo special!"*



*"How do I feel about us? I feel that America is a safer place today because of the steps taken by this Administration. That's how I feel about us, Carolyn."*

• •

year-old single mother who had long corresponded with inmates at Pelican Bay—and, in the process, had become one of the gang's female followers—picked Scully up at the prison gate in her truck. Scully wore powder-blue sweatpants, a sweatshirt, and a watch cap. He had two hundred dollars in his pocket. Scully had previously sent Moore a series of seductive letters. In one, written on pink paper, he said, "All extraneous subversion manifests itself when we connect." In another, he wrote, "I will always be with you as you are one of me now. Our synergy is infinite."

After leaving the prison, the couple drove to the beach, where Scully walked along the shore, collecting seashells. The following day, though, he found a sawed-off shotgun, and he and Moore set out for Santa Rosa, driving south along Highway 101. Six days after Scully's release, they stopped near a saloon in the middle of the night. A police car pulled up behind their pickup truck. As a fifty-eight-year-old deputy sheriff approached with his flashlight, Scully leaped out with his shotgun. The deputy raised his hands over his head, but Scully shot him between the eyes.

The Aryan Brotherhood was now killing on the outside with as little hesitation as it had on the inside. Similarly, the gang was expanding its racketeering operation onto the streets. In letters written in 1999 to one recent parolee, the Baron said, "We especially need for some to step-up," and, referring to the gang's shamrock symbol, he urged, "START POLISHING THE ROCK out there!!!" The gang allegedly enlisted paroled A.B. members and associates to become drug dealers, gunrunners, stickup men, and hit men. Some Pelican Bay inmates were discovered mapping out establishments to rob.

That same year, a reputed Brand member on the streets walked into the Palm Springs home of a drug dealer who wasn't sharing enough of his profits with the gang. Witnesses told police that the A.B. member pulled out a .38 and unloaded five bullets into the man's chest and head, telling everyone in the room that this was for "the fellows"—the Ayran Brotherhood—up north at Pelican Bay, and warning that new brothers were being released every day.

A year later, in a letter disguised as privileged legal mail, the gang spoke of plans to "buy a warehouse with offices on some large acreage." The letter's author, a member who was about to be released, added, "I'll outfit it with a well-stocked law library, computer research desk, copy machine, iron pile, pool table, big screen TV, car and bike garage with tools, handball courts, etc. This will be the Brand Ranch. . . . This will be home base for us out there."

Around the same time, a longtime reputed A.B. member confided to authorities that he had been approached at the supermax in Colorado by the gang and asked for technical help in making bombs. The gang, he was informed, was planning terrorist attacks on federal facilities across the United States. "It's become irrational," he told authorities after declining to help. "They're talking about car bombs, truck bombs, and mail bombs."

Just when the Brotherhood seemed poised to take a particularly violent turn, Jessner unleashed the United States Marshals. Nearly four decades after the gang was born, it found itself under siege.

The courthouse where one of the first trials against the Brand would take place was in the middle of a verdant forest in Benton, Illinois, about thirty miles from Marion prison. It had been built on the edges of a circular clearing, and stood not far from a dozen or so dilapidated brick storefronts. Some of the stores had been shut down; others had signs offering discounts, as if they would soon join them.

A single alleged A.B. murder, which was included in Jessner's sprawling indictment, also fell under the jurisdiction of the United States Attorney in the Southern District of Illinois. The trial, which began last September, centered on David Sakahian, McElhiney's most feared cohort, the man who had once reputedly had an inmate stabbed for bumping him during a basketball game. He was charged with ordering two alleged associates to murder a thirty-seven-year-old bank robber named Terry Walker during a 1999 race war at Marion. Sahakian, along with his two associates, faced the death penalty. The trial offered a glimpse of what will happen early next year in Los Angeles, when Jessner will begin to prosecute forty people, including McElhiney and the Baron.

Even though the Benton trial involved only one A.B. member and two associates, the United States Marshals walled off the entire building. For the first time in the court's history, cement barricades had been placed around the exterior. To get inside, I had to pass through two metal detectors.

Nearly a dozen marshals, dressed in black suits and black shoes, led the defendants, whose wrists and ankles were shackled, into the courtroom. Sahakian wore gray slacks and a gray short-sleeved shirt. Everything about him was big: his hands; his stomach; his long, sloping forehead. Whereas in old photographs he had an unruly beard—it apparently had inspired his nickname, the Beast—now he had only a goatee, which made his face look even larger.

His wife was in the gallery, and he winked at her as he sat down. She told me that they had met twenty-five years ago, and that during twenty-three of those years he had been behind bars. Petite, with blond hair and a blue miniskirt that exposed well-toned legs, she gave off a strong scent of perfume. She sat right behind him, taking notes throughout the trial. At one point, she told me, "They keep saying he's a boss of the Aryan Brotherhood and that he ordered everyone around. But I don't believe it. He can't even order *me* around."

When a pathologist took the stand, the prosecution projected on a large screen a photograph of Walker's body. It was stretched out on a metal table. There were bloodstains on his chest, his eyes were open, and his mouth appeared to be frozen midspeech. The pathologist described each stab wound. Then he pointed to a hole in the heart—it was the one that killed him, he said.

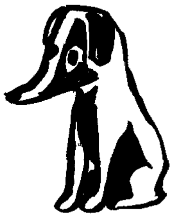
None of the defendants looked up at the screen, and, other than the marshals and Sahakian's wife, the gallery was empty. Nobody from the victim's family was there. Jessner had told me that most of these victims had already been cast out by society, and, when they were killed, few people, if any, cared. "I feel a certain obligation to defend those who have no one to defend them," he had said.

After a break in the trial, the defendant who had purportedly held the victim down during the attack refused to come out of a holding room. The judge ordered the marshals to forcibly carry him out. Sahakian leaped to his feet and said that that wasn't necessary. "If I go back there," he said in a commanding voice, "he'll come out." At last, a marshal went out to the holding room and escorted the defendant into the courtroom. He walked with pointed slowness and stared at the prosecutor. "What the fuck you looking at!" he yelled.

Six marshals quickly hovered around him. As he sat down, he slammed his chair into the groin of one of the agents. Eventually, order was restored, and, when an inmate who had helped stab several black inmates took the stand as a government witness, Sahakian rubbed his fingers along the arm of his chair. Each time the witness made allegations against Sahakian, he seemed to grip the chair more tightly. His knuckles turned white. Finally, he glanced toward me in the gallery and said, "Don't believe a word he's saying. He's nothin' better than a shit-house rat."

"Don't use that language, honey," his wife said.

"Metaphorically speaking," he said.



Several inmates who had told authorities that they were prepared to come forward had also said that they were frightened to do so. One said that since he had turned on the A.B. his family had been threatened. Another, who had provided evidence, was staying in his cell, clutching his rosary beads. He said, "I'll say my prayers that I don't get about seventy-five holes in me."

Jessner was sitting at his desk at his headquarters in Los Angeles, preparing pretrial motions. While he was awaiting a verdict in the Benton trial, which was expected as early as this month, he needed to get ready not just for one trial but for potentially five or six—since not all forty defendants could be held safely in one courtroom. Security was already a challenge; most of the inmates, including the Baron and McElhiney, were being held in single cells at the West Valley Detention Center, outside Los Angeles. Some defendants had been found with drugs and concealed razor blades.

Fearing that the gang might turn on its own, Jessner had placed a few A.B. members in other prisons. In a letter, the Baron had told another gang member, "It's likely necessary for us to step-up and conduct a thorough evaluation of every brother's personal character and level of commitment, as we currently possess some serious rot that is in fact potentially a cancer!" He added that it should be "a top priority to wipe them off the face of this earth!"

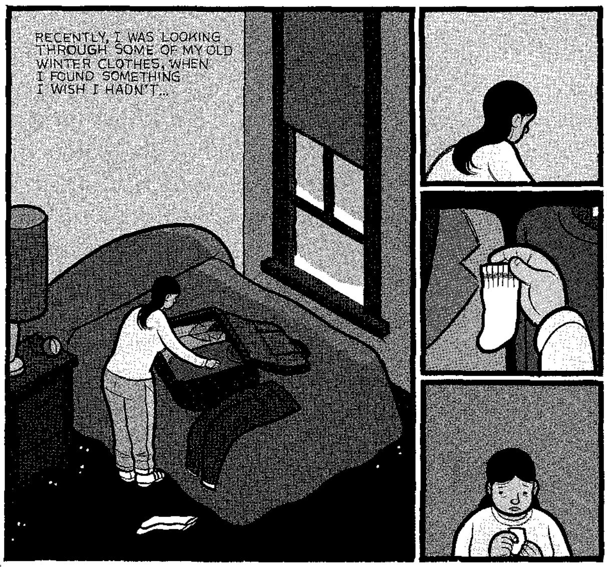
Jessner said he knew that the gang was trying to hold on to its operations, but he was optimistic about the upcoming trials. "I can't say for sure if another gang will take the Brotherhood's place, or if new leaders will replace the old ones," he said. "But I know that if we succeed it will send a message that the Aryan Brotherhood can no longer kill with impunity."

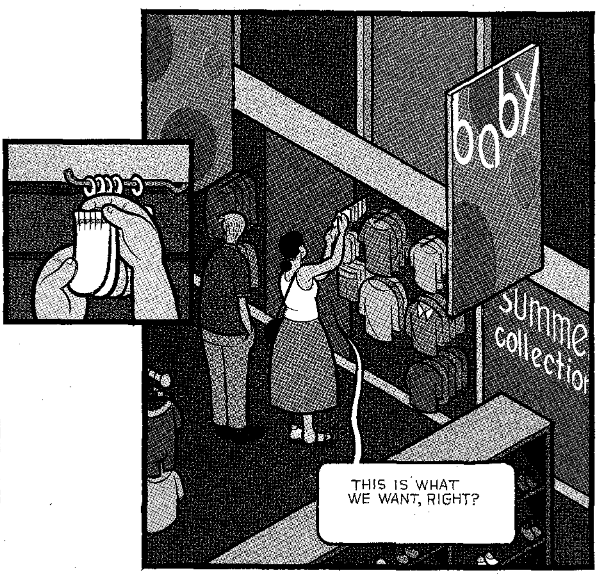
Jessner got up and started heading toward the courtroom, to attend a pretrial hearing. He was wearing a charcoal suit that seemed too loose for his small frame. I asked him if, as some feared, he had been "put in the hat"—marked for assassination.

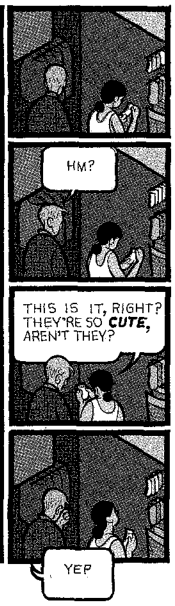
He blanched. "I don't know," he said. He later added, "It's a pretty big hat."

The United States Attorney had arranged extra security for him, including a secure parking space nearby. One of his colleagues had declined to work on the case after his wife objected. "I worry," Jessner admitted. "You can't help but worry."

He paused and looked at me. He wouldn't feel right if he stopped, he said. "I don't believe that because you rob a convenience store you should receive a death sentence. I don't believe that our prisons should be divided into predators and prey." As he headed into the courtroom, he added, "I don't believe that that is what our system intended by justice." ♦


RECENTLY, I WAS LOOKING THROUGH SOME OF MY OLD WINTER CLOTHES, WHEN I FOUND SOMETHING I WISH I HADN'T...

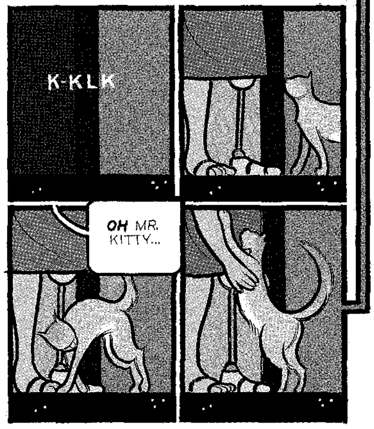

baby
summer collection
THIS IS WHAT WE WANT, RIGHT?

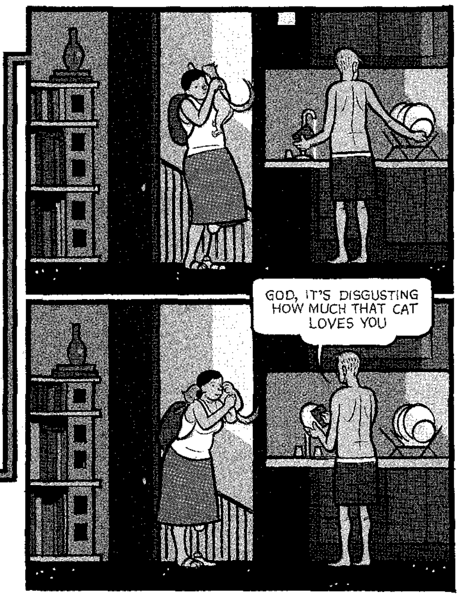

HM?
THIS IS IT, RIGHT? THEY'RE SO **CUTE**, AREN'T THEY?
YEP

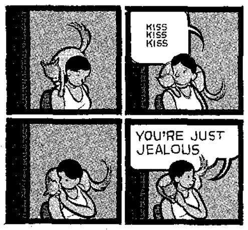
# THE WHOLE TIME

MY FIRST BOYFRIEND AND I LIVED TOGETHER. HE WAS PRETTY CAREFUL TO KEEP OUR RESPECTIVE POSSESSIONS SEPARATE... HE HATED IT WHEN OUR DISHES GOT MIXED UP, OR WHEN I BORROWED HIS TEXTBOOKS, AND ESPECIALLY WHEN I DID OUR LAUNDRY IN THE SAME LOAD...

BUT **ONE** THING WAS UNMISTAKABLY **OURS**, TOGETHER...

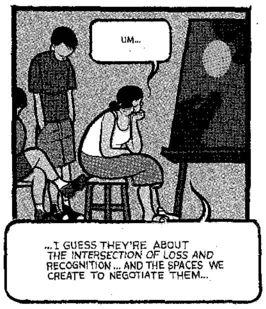

K-KLK
**OH** MR. KITTY...

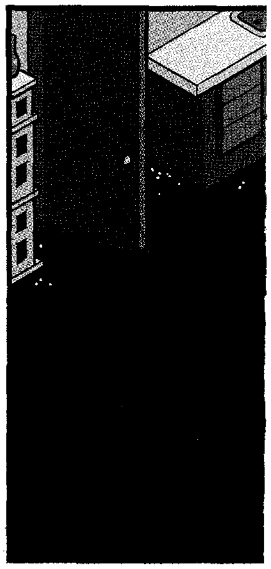

GOD, IT'S DISGUSTING HOW MUCH THAT CAT LOVES YOU


KISS KISS KISS
YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS

WE'D FOUND HIM IN THE PARKING LOT OF THE APARTMENT COMPLEX SHORTLY AFTER WE MET AND STARTED FEEDING HIM OUT OF PITY... BEFORE WE KNEW IT, HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY...

HE WAS A RELIEF TO COME HOME TO, ESPECIALLY AFTER SPENDING ALL DAY TRYING TO JUSTIFY MY TERRIBLE PAINTINGS TO MY TEACHERS AND TO MYSELF...

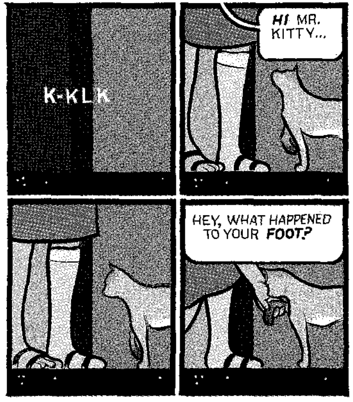

UM...
...I GUESS THEY'RE ABOUT THE INTERSECTION OF LOSS AND RECOGNITION... AND THE SPACES WE CREATE TO NEGOTIATE THEM...



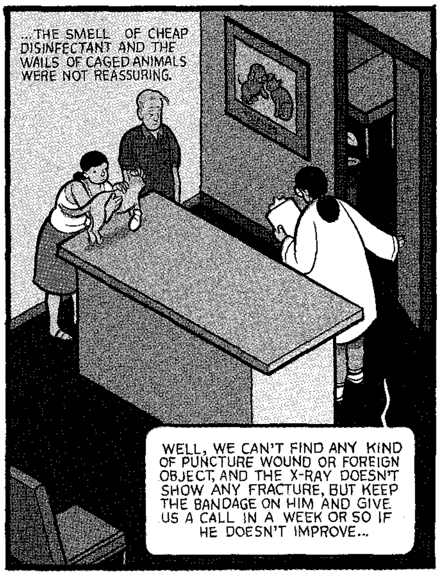
IF I'D KNOWN HE WAS SO ***DOOMED***, THOUGH, I WOULDN'T HAVE ALLOWED MYSELF TO BECOME SO ATTACHED TO HIM...

...EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THAT'S A STUPID THING TO SAY...

# ONE DAY,

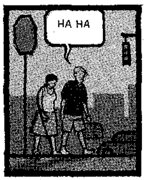

K-KLK
**HI** MR. KITTY...
HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR **FOOT?**

WE CAME HOME AND HE WAS DRAGGING ONE OF HIS PAWS BEHIND HIM, BLOODIED AND DIRTY... QUICKLY, WE PUT HIM IN HIS CARRIER AND TOOK HIM TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ANIMAL HOSPITAL, A RATHER TAWDRY PLACE (WE LIVED IN A "CHANGING" PART OF THE CITY) BUT IT WAS CLOSE, AND WE DIDN'T HAVE A CAR...

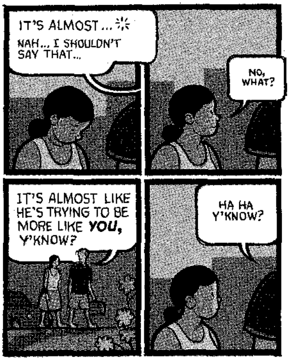

...THE SMELL OF CHEAP DISINFECTANT AND THE WAILS OF CAGED ANIMALS WERE NOT REASSURING.
WELL, WE CAN'T FIND ANY KIND OF PUNCTURE WOUND OR FOREIGN OBJECT, AND THE X-RAY DOESN'T SHOW ANY FRACTURE, BUT KEEP THE BANDAGE ON HIM AND GIVE US A CALL IN A WEEK OR SO IF HE DOESN'T IMPROVE...

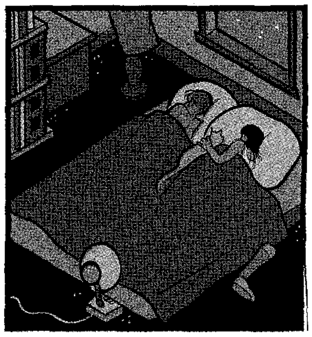
# WE SPLIT

THE BILL, OF COURSE, DOWN THE MIDDLE...

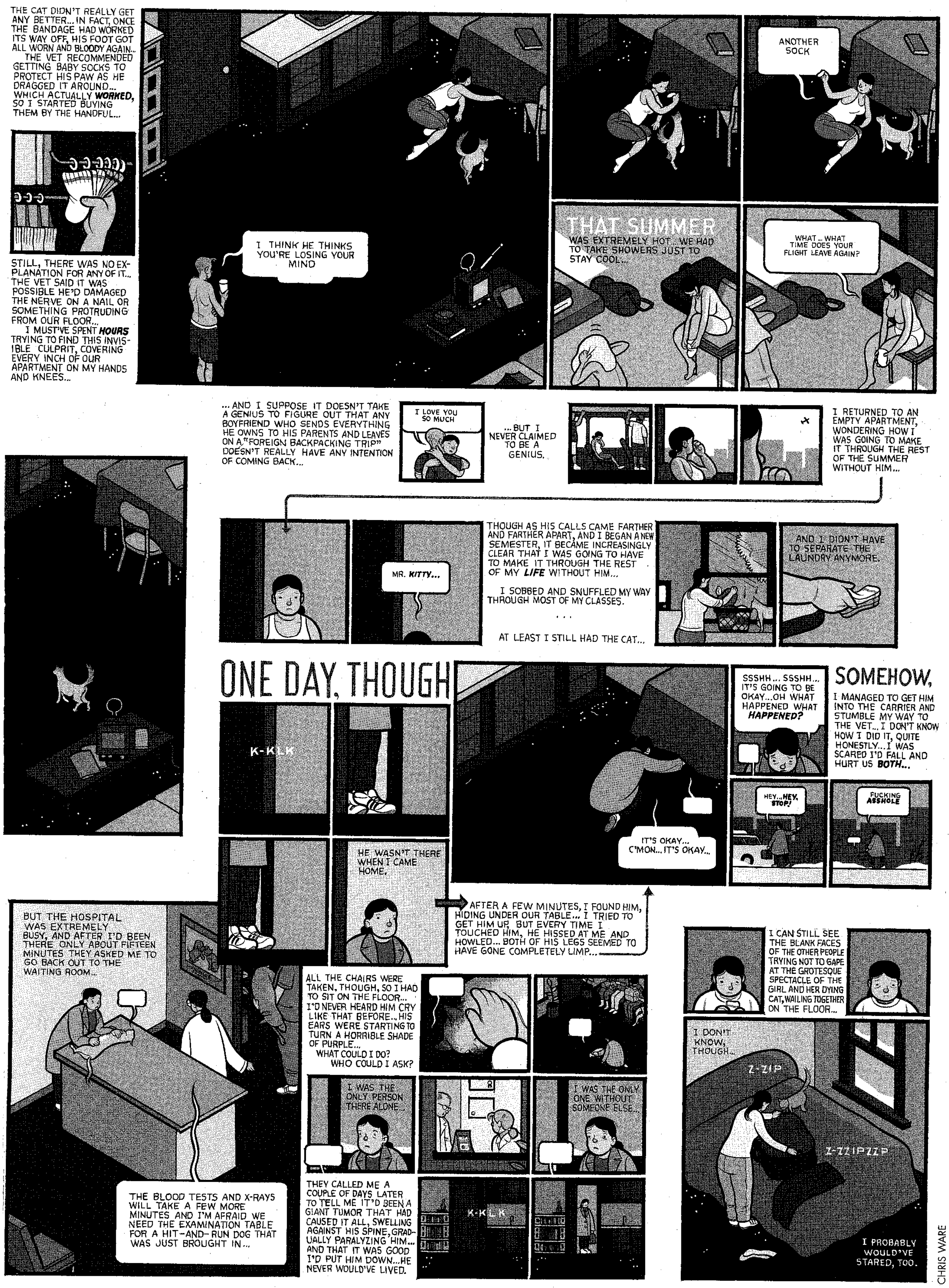


LATER, ON THE WAY HOME, MY BOYFRIEND SORT OF STARTED LAUGHING TO HIMSELF, QUIETLY...


IT'S ALMOST... NAH... I SHOULDN'T SAY THAT...
NO, WHAT?
IT'S ALMOST LIKE HE'S TRYING TO BE MORE LIKE **YOU**, Y'KNOW?
HA HA Y'KNOW?



ANYWAY.


THE CAT DIDN'T REALLY GET ANY BETTER... IN FACT, ONCE THE BANDAGE HAD WORKED ITS WAY OFF, HIS FOOT GOT ALL WORN AND BLOODY AGAIN... THE VET RECOMMENDED GETTING BABY SOCKS TO PROTECT HIS PAW AS HE DRAGGED IT AROUND... WHICH ACTUALLY **WORKED,** SO I STARTED BUYING THEM BY THE HANDFUL...
STILL, THERE WAS NO EXPLANATION FOR ANY OF IT... THE VET SAID IT WAS POSSIBLE HE'D DAMAGED THE NERVE ON A NAIL OR SOMETHING PROTRUDING FROM OUR FLOOR... I MUST'VE SPENT ***HOURS*** TRYING TO FIND THIS INVISIBLE CULPRIT, COVERING EVERY INCH OF OUR APARTMENT ON MY HANDS AND KNEES...
I THINK HE THINKS YOU'RE LOSING YOUR MIND
ANOTHER SOCK
THAT SUMMER WAS EXTREMELY HOT... WE HAD TO TAKE SHOWERS JUST TO STAY COOL...
WHAT... WHAT TIME DOES YOUR FLIGHT LEAVE AGAIN?
...AND I SUPPOSE IT DOESN'T TAKE A GENIUS TO FIGURE OUT THAT ANY BOYFRIEND WHO SENDS EVERYTHING HE OWNS TO HIS PARENTS AND LEAVES ON A "FOREIGN BACKPACKING TRIP" DOESN'T REALLY HAVE ANY INTENTION OF COMING BACK...
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH
...BUT I NEVER CLAIMED TO BE A GENIUS.
I RETURNED TO AN EMPTY APARTMENT, WONDERING HOW I WAS GOING TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE REST OF THE SUMMER WITHOUT HIM...
MR. ***KITTY...***
THOUGH AS HIS CALLS CAME FARTHER AND FARTHER APART, AND I BEGAN A NEW SEMESTER, IT BECAME INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE REST OF MY ***LIFE*** WITHOUT HIM...
I SOBBED AND SNUFFLED MY WAY THROUGH MOST OF MY CLASSES.
. . .
AT LEAST I STILL HAD THE CAT...
AND I DIDN'T HAVE TO SEPARATE THE LAUNDRY ANYMORE.
ONE DAY, THOUGH
K-KLK
HE WASN'T THERE WHEN I CAME HOME.
AFTER A FEW MINUTES, I FOUND HIM, HIDING UNDER OUR TABLE... I TRIED TO GET HIM UP, BUT EVERY TIME I TOUCHED HIM, HE HISSED AT ME AND HOWLED... BOTH OF HIS LEGS SEEMED TO HAVE GONE COMPLETELY LIMP...
IT'S OKAY... C'MON... IT'S OKAY...
SSSHH... SSSHH... IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY...OH WHAT HAPPENED WHAT ***HAPPENED?***
SOMEHOW,
I MANAGED TO GET HIM INTO THE CARRIER AND STUMBLE MY WAY TO THE VET... I DON'T KNOW HOW I DID IT, QUITE HONESTLY... I WAS SCARED I'D FALL AND HURT US ***BOTH...***
HEY... ***HEY, STOP!***
FUCKING ***ASSHOLE***
BUT THE HOSPITAL WAS EXTREMELY BUSY, AND AFTER I'D BEEN THERE ONLY ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES THEY ASKED ME TO GO BACK OUT TO THE WAITING ROOM...
THE BLOOD TESTS AND X-RAYS WILL TAKE A FEW MORE MINUTES AND I'M AFRAID WE NEED THE EXAMINATION TABLE FOR A HIT-AND-RUN DOG THAT WAS JUST BROUGHT IN...
ALL THE CHAIRS WERE TAKEN, THOUGH, SO I HAD TO SIT ON THE FLOOR... I'D NEVER HEARD HIM CRY LIKE THAT BEFORE... HIS EARS WERE STARTING TO TURN A HORRIBLE SHADE OF PURPLE... WHAT COULD I DO? WHO COULD I ASK?
I WAS THE ONLY PERSON THERE ALONE...
I WAS THE ONLY ONE WITHOUT SOMEONE ELSE...
THEY CALLED ME A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER TO TELL ME IT'D BEEN A GIANT TUMOR THAT HAD CAUSED IT ALL, SWELLING AGAINST HIS SPINE, GRADUALLY PARALYZING HIM... AND THAT IT WAS GOOD I'D PUT HIM DOWN... HE NEVER WOULD'VE LIVED.
K-KLK
I CAN STILL SEE THE BLANK FACES OF THE OTHER PEOPLE TRYING NOT TO GAPE AT THE GROTESQUE SPECTACLE OF THE GIRL AND HER DYING CAT, WAILING TOGETHER ON THE FLOOR...
I DON'T KNOW, THOUGH...
Z-ZIP
Z-ZZIPZZP
I PROBABLY WOULD'VE STARED, TOO.

CHRIS WARE

FICTION

# LA RAGAZZA

BY ANDREA LEE

The first time Orso sees the new maid, he thinks she is a living doll. Not in the dated American slang sense—with which he is familiar because he was once married to a woman from New England (that overeducated and thorny beauty would never have used the phrase, but somehow in her chilly Puritan environs he brushed against it and picked it up like a burr)—but in a literal sense: she resembles a doll. The maid's name is Caterina Zupancic, and she is Romanian, like so many of the maids in Turin these days, the ones whom Orso hears his wife, Lili, and her friends discussing in minute detail, as women always discuss their domestic help. Each maid is invariably referred to not by name but as either *la colf*—short for *collaboratrice familiare*, or family helper—or *la ragazza*, the girl. This particular girl has a flat, almost perfectly round face. Her cheeks, slightly scarred by acne, have a puffy droop that suggests childish sullenness or a case of the mumps. Then there are black eyes that seem to be set flush with the surface of her skin, a conventional rosebud mouth, and, barely restrained with a plastic clip, an almost inhumanly abundant mass of black hair, thick and wiry, with a coarse gleam that makes it look synthetic. Like the most successful maids, she is not beautiful and not too young. If she is a doll—Orso amuses himself by thinking—she is a slightly battered one, dragged around by the legs, left out in the rain, undressed with the cruel energy of an excessively loving little mistress.

The interview takes place, irritatingly, in Orso's study—irritatingly because he hates the way that Lili, wise in so many other matters, drags him into the endless hiring and firing of their foreign domestic workers. The girl is wearing a carefully pressed pair of jeans that delineate a sturdy, flat bottom; also a pair of worn ankle boots and a blouse of some cheap flowered material whose large collar suggests a convent uniform. Her documents—reassuringly in order—say that she is thirty-two, but she stands in front of Orso's desk with her spine straight and her hands clasped behind her back like a pupil at a school recitation. With her eyes cast down, she tells him, in a high fluting voice, that she was trained as a nurse, and Lili nods approvingly in the background. Also standing and grinning in the background is Milan, the Romanian handyman who found Caterina for them when their previous maid quit. Milan, a wiry rascal with rings in both ears, is married but a notorious womanizer among the maids of the neighborhood, and he is staring wolfishly at Caterina. When the interview is over and the girl turns to go, Orso sees Milan slyly pinch her upper arm. Caterina flushes a dull red and moves away with a hopeless sort of slowness, like a penned animal, and Orso, who is a warmhearted, impulsive man, feels an unexpected flash of anger.

For the first three months or so, Lili is enthusiastic about the new maid, who is so much better than the string of disasters they've had over the past year, since Pernotta, the faithful Sardinian who'd been with them for eight years, decamped to marry a tobacconist from Bolzano. Since then, there have been officious Filipinas who dropped unfinished any task that overran union hours; a melancholy Peruvian who sobbed through the ironing; a thickly lipsticked Moldavian, brilliant at cooking, whom they discovered to be a kleptomaniac after she'd stolen two tea kettles; a tall, practical-looking Piedmontese whom they fired after the first dinner, when she served a roast chicken with the head and feet intact. Slapstick catastrophes that have almost convinced the small and efficient Lili that she'd be better off muddling through without a live-in servant.

But there's the apartment to think of. Two elaborately panelled floors and a terrace at the top of an Art Nouveau house in the Crocetta district: huge, and as complicated and demanding as an elderly relative. And though Orso and Lili have no children—this is a second marriage for Lili, a third for Orso, and Orso's grownup half-American daughters live, respectively, in Palo Alto and Tokyo—they entertain a lot. Orso's job as a sourcing consultant to European manufacturers requires it. The younger son of a family of Padua intellectuals, Orso has many famous friends. Men love him for his generous, convivial nature, while women are drawn to the innocent, greedy look in his boyish blue eyes. Their dinner table has become one of the important salons of Turin, and their parties—two or three a week—are carefully planned to appear casual and relaxed, in a way that appeals to the professors, journalists, C.E.O.s, leftist politicians, and members of the European Parliament who meet at their house. The food may be simple—sometimes Piedmontese, sometimes peasant recipes from his and Lili's home region in the Veneto, sometimes Chinese and Singaporean dishes, prepared in Lili's quick and expert fashion—but the details have to be impeccable with such people. Lili finds in Caterina a true "family collaborator," an intelligent but unpretentious woman who listens to directions, observes the way her employer wants things, and then swiftly anticipates her desires. A pearl.

Awakening at dawn in her comfortable room under the eaves—a room that, as Lili is quick to point out, is not the usual maid's cell but a former guest room, sunny and well heated, with a first-rate shower and satellite TV—Caterina fixes coffee for Lili and Orso, and has begun putting the house in order by eight o'clock. In the afternoon, she washes and irons, and prepares the evening meal. She is not garrulous and intrusive, like Pernotta, but as silent and efficient as a Filipina, her presence in a room signalled by the hum of the vacuum cleaner or by the smell of bleach and water which, in the old-fashioned manner, she uses to clean windows and stone floors.

Her constant companion is the low crooning of the radio, set unvaryingly on Radio Maria, the Catholic station. She goes to confession on Thursday afternoons at the Romanian church on Via della Consolata, and to Mass early on Sunday mornings at the hilltop cathedral of Superga. She never pesters Lili for extra time to go out, as most *colfs* her age do, nor is she man-crazy and continually getting calls on a cell phone. The girl seems perfect—like those legendary housemaids that grandmothers always reminisce about, who came as orphans from convents and stayed for a lifetime, until they were just as much a part of the big Veneto farmhouses as the ancient round pillars that flanked the gates. "Wouldn't it be fabulous to have her for life," Lili jokes in bed one night to Orso, who agrees, though he is bored by the subject of maids in general. When Lili gets infatuated with a new girl and

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rattles on about the maid's inevitable boyfriend or passport problems, adding empathetic vignettes of miserable childhoods in appalling foreign countries, Orso presses an imaginary mute button and thinks serenely about work.

There is only one problem, Lili goes on, oblivious of his lack of interest, and that is that she's got a body odor. Not the usual odor of unwashed hair and flesh that one sometimes has to point out to these Eastern European girls. No, Caterina is scrupulously, hygienically clean. They hear the upstairs shower running for half an hour every night. Hers is a curiously inhuman odor, strong and sterile, like that of mushrooms, which makes its way through the aura of bleach and cheap shampoo. "Probably a metabolic imbalance," says Lili, who plans to suggest delicately that the poor girl see a specialist.

If Orso is bored by maids, it is in the familiar, indulgent way that a man can be bored by sisters or female cousins, or ex-girlfriends who have become plump and unattractive. The fact is that the first cunt he ever saw belonged to a maid—Ida, who worked for his family in Padua when he was twelve. "Saw" is the crucial word; it was an unusually clinical, almost academic type of viewing. Ida, without underpants, perched precariously, legs askew, on the edge of the kitchen table, as Orso's brother, Remo, a year older, declaimed in a pompous, pedagogic tone: "*Questa, caro mio, è la fica*"—"This, Orso, my boy, is the pussy." Remo couldn't actually have had a schoolmaster's pointer, yet he was indicating with enough formality to suggest one: labia majora, labia minora, mons pubis, clitoris. Was he consulting a medical dictionary at the same time? It was possible. And leaning back on her elbows, giggling shameless encouragement in her singsong Friulano accent, was beautiful, brainless Ida, tall and blond and long-necked, with a head that looked as small as a goose's.

Describing the scene to his lovers over the years, Orso has romanticized what he saw between Ida's legs as a rose, pink-lipped and crimson in its depths, and has added a swirling frame of old-fashioned petticoats—when in fact the girl wore a coverall of postwar cut that squashed her thighs grotesquely when pulled up. What he really thought it looked like was a sea creature—edged with pale moss or cilia and exuding a mollusk's imperturbable smugness. An impression that was hardly dispelled a few evenings later when, much to Remo's chagrin, Orso was the one pulled down onto Ida's small hard bed, after she had invited him to her room to deliver some old copies of *Corriere dei Piccoli*, the children's weekly she used to read with her lips moving after washing the dinner dishes.

"Poor thing." This was the comment of Anne, Orso's American second wife, the mother of his children, who was quick to take up the cause of any woman against him.

"What do you mean, 'poor thing'? It was all Ida's idea to start with. She was eighteen or nineteen—and no virgin. A good housekeeper and a great cook, too. Nobody could make *knoederli* like hers. And she ended up fine. Married a *carabiniere* and came to my mother's funeral in a mink coat."

"Poor thing." This was Bettina, Orso's great love, who, throughout their six-year affair, stayed married to his business partner, Grellio. "I bet she didn't really have petticoats like a cancan dancer. Sounds too much like Belle Epoque pornography to me. And why did your mother hire a slut like that?"

"She was a brilliant laundress. Could get through my mother's entire trousseau of linen and hemp sheets and my father's shirts in a single day. And I think they expected her to relieve Remo and me of our virginity. That's what bourgeois families did in those days. So we wouldn't end up homosexual."

"Poor thing." This was Sveva, the twenty-two-year-old assistant accountant in Orso's office, with whom he occasionally sneaks off for a weekend. "So typical of men of your generation. You've all got a proto-Fascist nineteenth-century patriarchal mind-set. You've made the victim into an accomplice to quiet your sense of guilt."

"Poor thing," Lili says, lying in bed. Referring not to Ida but to Caterina. Lili's small body is curled around Orso's large buttocks and back like a coffee spoon cradling a large tablespoon, her head against his shoulder and her narrow feet inserted in a complicated advertisement

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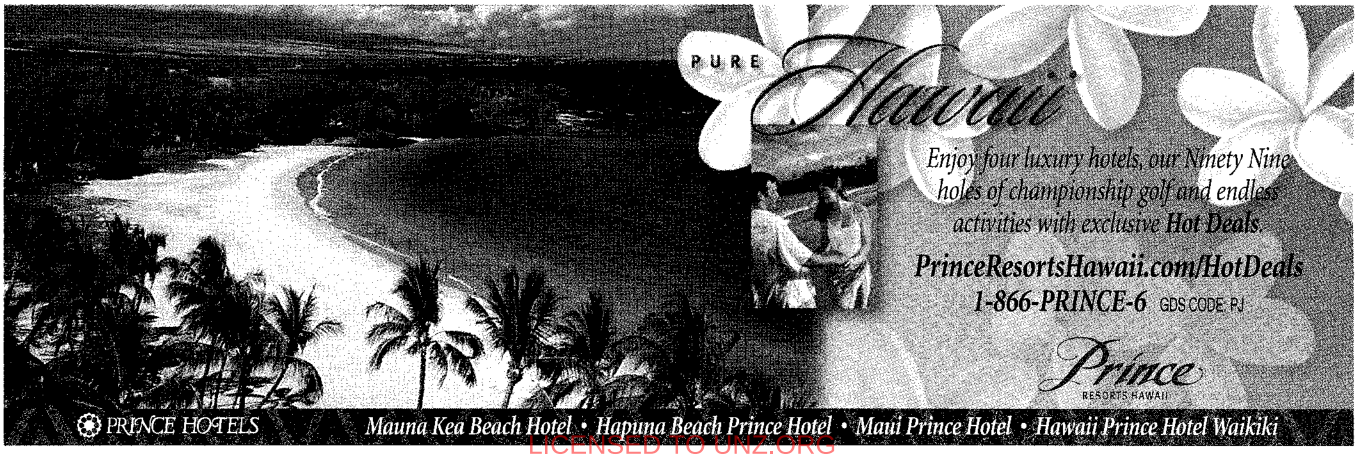

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PRINCE HOTELS Mauna Kea Beach Hotel • Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel • Maui Prince Hotel • Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki way between his big, hairy cyclist's ankles. It is eleven at night, and they can hear Caterina moving around in the room above them. Sturdy, deliberate footsteps, the rustle of the shower. Then a pause, and a delicate tinkling sound as Caterina urinates.

"Ridiculously loud," Orso grumbles. "I never realized how bad the acoustics are between the two rooms. We hardly heard anything when Pernotta was here."

"Poor thing. Maybe she pees in an odd position. I've heard that some of these Eastern European girls crouch on the seat—they've never seen a sit-down toilet."

Lili giggles into the back of Orso's tartan L. L. Bean pajamas that are a yearly Christmas present from Anne, and which Lili makes sure are perfectly ironed. Lili adores Orso, spoils him. She cuts his hair, or shaves it, rather, because he is balding; pedals mountain bikes through freezing mountain passes with his politician friends; imposes diets whenever he gets too fat; packs his clothes with layers of tissue paper for business trips; makes him laugh; unexpectedly keeps him interested. She is the fabulous third wife whom all of Orso's friends predicted would come his way after a long romantic career of rigid leftist beauties, abrasive foreigners, infantile students, unreconstructed feminists, and other people's wives.

Lili doesn't look like a helpmeet or a comfort. She is puckish, mercurial, tiny and flat-chested enough to wear boys' undershirts, which go with her cropped brown hair. But she has a round bottom that she often slaps and calls "my redeeming feature." Her real redeeming feature is her combination of peasant shrewdness and a genius for people. She is a live wire, a little clown with a vixen's face and long eyelashes that she bats hilariously as she tells, in broad Veneto dialect, the anecdotes that are her specialty. Other women—including Orso's ex-wives—love Lili, almost can't keep their hands off her, and as teen-agers Orso's daughters let her kiss them and tease them as they never would have allowed a parent. Important men flirt outrageously with her, as such men do with a woman who will never be available. When Orso met her nine years ago in Hong Kong, she was the sales assistant and sometime mistress of a small-time novelty importer from Genoa, unhappy about her precarious status at age thirty-five. Now with dazzling efficiency she runs three households: the Crocetta apartment; their weekend place, a modern lakeside cottage near Desenzano; and Orso's family house, a beautiful sixteenth-century villa set in the hills near Padua, which they rent seasonally to Americans, and where Lili sometimes cooks vast harvest suppers for thirty or forty vineyard workers. Lili's people come from the same area, but they are small shopkeepers, and indeed Orso's upper-class family despised her a little before falling under her extraordinary spell.

When Orso thinks about Lili, which is as rarely as one thinks about a healthy right arm, he imagines the indestructible high spirits of Pulcinella. The same valiant good nature that makes your throat catch as you watch a child performing with cheerful doggedness in a school play. He married her on impulse, during a trip to New York, because he discovered that, like a schoolgirl, she was carrying in her wallet four colored rubber bands she had bought from a Gypsy after making a wish: to have him—big, promiscuous Orso, with his guileless eyes and irrepressible appetites—forever.

Now the husband and wife lie listening to the intimate noises that Caterina seems strangely able to project through the floor. "I wonder if she listens to us screwing," Lili whispers.

"No, the sound goes one way. Don't you remember when we slept up there when the whole family was here before Easter? We couldn't even hear the television from this room."

They lie silent until Orso feels Lili's body relax and hears her break into one of her frail, questioning snores. He himself is wide awake. Excited, though not physically. Mentally. He imagines Caterina lying in the darkness above them, the sheet and quilt pulled up tight, the coarse mass of hair spread on the pillow. Does she masturbate? Orso himself has masturbated so many times in his life to the idea of this kind of lonely girl touching herself in a convent or a garret that the question is automatic, but at this moment not interesting. Sex, he thinks, is always explicable. The real conundrum is what she sees before she goes to sleep. Faces, perhaps; foreign

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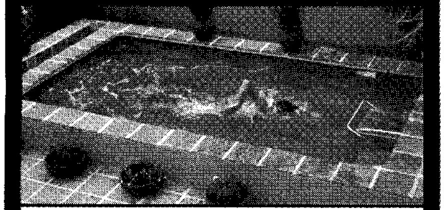

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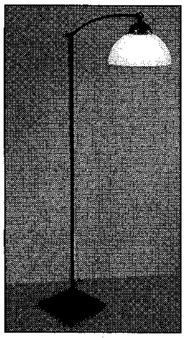

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landscapes sketched on black-and-white backgrounds as stark as the rudimentary scenes in Ida's *Corriere dei Piccoli*. Housemaids' dreams: that's an expression, isn't it? Yet what do these girls dream about? Is it princes or boyfriends or shiny red shoes or mothers with faces cavernous from starvation? Or does their exhaustion level everything? Orso has never been able to guess. Even the Italian maids of his childhood, with their dialects and their poverty, their stinking villages ravaged by the war, were mysteries to him. Though their bedrooms were sometimes opened to him, they remained little boxes of secrets in the family house. He falls asleep thinking of the solitary girl overhead.

In the spring and early summer, Orso travels non-stop, between Turin and Rome and London and southeastern China. He has a new project, a company that will enable leading Italian manufacturers—a provincial breed he knows well—to overcome their shyness about producing in China. It seems to be the big thing he has been looking for all his life—he who, for all his property and important friends, has never had enough money. It is perhaps the thing that will finally overcome the disdain of Orso's dead father, a legendary Marxist professor in iconic gold spectacles, a friend of Gramsci who was revered among Padua students. The father who, of course, always preferred his older son, Remo, the lawyer. Orso knows that his father, for all his leftist-intellectual-aristocratic distaste for having a son in trade, had a fundamental Veneto respect for a thumping big fortune. So Orso drums up investors, struggles through meetings with partners from Guangzhou and Suzhou, clocks thousands of air miles on Cathay Pacific, and still finds time to bed Barbara Yi, a factory owner's divorced wife, as small-boned as Lili. Occasionally, he brings along Lili herself, who trawls the Guangzhou markets for designer knockoffs and charms the Chinese associates with her capacity for endless toasts of Rémy Martin. He himself is so charmed by his wife's blissful happiness at travelling with him that he politely abandons Ms. Yi.

He is always refreshed by coming home to the Turin apartment, especially now that everything is running so smoothly. Though he never notices domestic details, it is undeniable that everything that can gleam gleams, from his shoes to the silver picture frames. As it did in his mother's house.

He also notices:

Caterina's pajamas, on a night when the fall wind sets off the burglar alarm, and he and she nearly collide in the cold entryway, where the air is reverberating with metallic shrieks. They look exactly as he might imagine Eastern Bloc pajamas to look. Biscuit-colored leggings below a shapeless flannel nightgown sprinkled with what look like tiny maroon ants. Her unfettered breasts seem smaller than he'd imagined, cone-shaped like an African girl's. Her round face is flushed a meaty pink, and slit-eyed with sleepiness, and her hair swarms around her head so that she looks more than ever like a toy that a rough little girl has held upside down and shaken. He presses a button and the alarm stops, and he says to her in the playful tone he can never resist using with any woman, "One of your boyfriends trying to sneak in, eh, *piccola*?"

To this pushy remark she doesn't reply flirtatiously, or blush, or act haughtily offended, as other girls might. She gives him one flat black glance and then heads upstairs, whispering "Good night" in a voice so faint he might have imagined it.

And he notices:

That Caterina, *la ragazza*, uses the family computer, the big, rather outdated I.B.M. in the corner of the living room. Lili has given her permission to do this, even chuckling about it in an indulgent way, as if over a clever child. Several times, coming in from a late evening, they have found Caterina bent over the keyboard. She has informed them,

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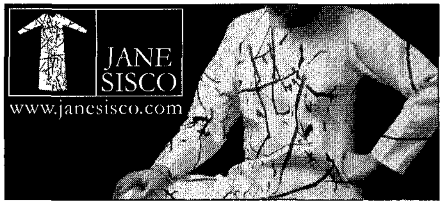

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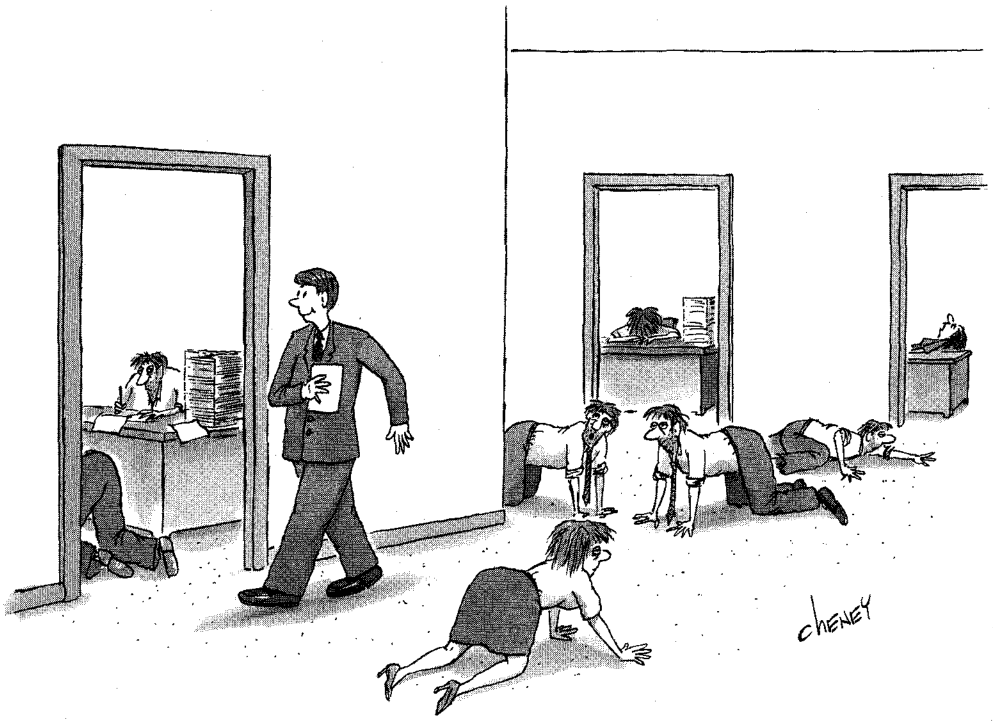

*"Check out the new guy."*

• •

timidly, that they can take a few euros out of her monthly salary for her use of the Internet. What is she doing? Lili has told him that Caterina is an orphan, raised by an aunt in a village outside Bucharest, and Orso imagines her e-mails arriving on a primitive computer in the corner of a Baba Yaga hut. One day, out of curiosity, he takes a look at the sites that have been visited, and finds that Caterina has looked up documents for nursing certification in Italy. A laudable thing: the girl wants to get ahead. But another site she has visited is a strange Christian crackpot chat room, where people speculate on U.F.O.s, Madame Blavatsky, and the Holy Grail. Orso doesn't tell Lili about this, a little ashamed of his own snooping.

And:

That Caterina speaks English better than Lili does, as he finds out when she takes a phone message from Anne.

And:

That other Romanian maids are prettier than Caterina. Visiting friends in Pino Torinese, he and Lili find the door to a bland suburban villa opened by a stunning beauty with raven eyebrows and danger in her smile. It's another Romanian *ragazza*, his friend Giorgio's *colf.* In a private moment after dinner, which is served with queenly indifference by the beauty, Giorgio confides to Orso that he hasn't fucked her yet but hopes to, encouraged by a hint of sluttishness in the girl's demeanor. "They're all gorgeous, these Eastern European girls," Giorgio says. "Makes you remember when everyone had Australian au pairs. That halcyon time. Look on the streets—the teen-age hookers are all Moldavian and Romanian now. Beautiful and penniless and white, the best of all worlds. You have a Romanian, too, don't you? How's yours?"

"Not bad at all," Orso says, summoning up a lubricious grin to defend poor, outclassed Caterina.

And also:

That Caterina's hands, like all maids' hands, are purplish from scrubbing. Raw with cleanliness. Her nails are bitten down, leaving red half-moons of gnawed skin.

No one could be more self-effacing than Caterina around the house. She speaks rarely, and—except for that time in the entryway—never looks either Lili or Orso in the eye. She is at the point where she can anticipate the needs and desires of the household: market lists, the arrival of guests, the delivery of heating oil and mineral water. Lili now lets Caterina prepare desserts, including an elaborate pear-and-chocolate torte, and she is becoming famous among Lili's female friends as a sort of pinnacle of *colfdom.*

The only one who is not enchanted with Caterina is the *portiere's* wife, Enrica, a faded sixtyish blonde, who helps out with ironing and spring cleaning, and has a gossipy maternal relationship with Lili, whom she often lures into her little soup-scented apartment under the stairs. One day, Enrica tells Lili that Caterina is clearly sex-starved: just look at those pimples on her cheeks. The next day, she hints that the girl is probably pregnant: look how much weight she has put on. And what about the peculiar friends who come to pick her up when Orso and Lili are out of town? Often there's a silver BMW station wagon with a distinguished-looking older man, and out trips the young lady in high-heeled boots with her nose in the air.

"Well, it would be interesting if she had a secret life as a prostitute," Orso tells Lili one night. "We could hire her outside of working hours to come to bed with us. Do you fancy a threesome?"

"No," Lili says, and says nothing else, displays no satisfying outrage at Orso's provocation. He knows he's overstepped the line: he can say anything to Lili, but he can't bring women she knows into their sex talk.

"She's too ugly, anyway," he adds quickly, but Lili remains silent.

Orso, in fact, doesn't want to think of Caterina as a spicy maid from a French novel. He thinks little about her, and when he does it is a curious comfort to cancel out the silver BMW and see her as a vague sort of nun, devoted to bleach and furniture and the temple that is his home. Occasionally, when he has to walk behind her up the stairs, he recalls a line from one of Moravia's Roman stories: "I was trying not to look at her legs, as one does with a woman one respects."

One weekend in Sicily, after he and Lili and friends have eaten lunch at a trattoria on the slopes of Mt. Etna, he passes through the gift shop and picks out from among the postcards of eruptions a small crude Madonna carved in lava. Black, faceless. "Yes, it's exactly the kind of tacky thing she'd like," Lili says, and loyally picks out another lava carving for Orso's secretary. When he presents it to Caterina, she trembles and clutches it in both hands and breathes out a hoarse "*Grazie*," so that Orso feels ashamed at how little he is giving.

Then there is Milan, the odd-job man. Caterina has shyly told Lili how he and his hellish wife, Myrta, run a kind of way station for girls like her, illegally arrived from their home province of Ilfov, how they keep the girls locked in a room and demand exorbitant fees for getting them work and documents, threatening to report them to the immigration authorities, or, worse, to the Romanian Mafia, who will put them to work on the streets. How Milan, with his gold neck chain, struts through the girls like a rooster in a hen yard. Milan still hangs around Orso's apartment, too, and Lili surprises him one day in the ironing room—he was supposed to be fixing an electrical socket—with his hand on Caterina's bottom. Lili laughs, but Orso goes and speaks to Milan. Tells him that if he doesn't keep his fucking hands off he'll be out of a job.

"You're unusually gallant," Lili observes.

"I'm practical, dearest," Orso says. "I've never had my shirts ironed so well."

Then everything changes. It starts when Orso goes to visit his brother Remo one Saturday morning in September, at his house outside the city in Castagnetto Po, and notices something odd about Remo's complexion. It's as if Remo, who has a nasty cough and a lingering cold, had been dipped in pink wax. His arms and legs—the brothers are in shorts, stretched out on lawn chairs in Remo's garden—are pink, too. He looks curiously younger, idealized but not healthy, as if he had been turned into a store mannequin or one of the cheap PVC action figures made in Suzhou by Orso's clients.

Orso notes this phenomenon, but does not understand—nor does Remo—that it is a sign of incurable illness, of a body already colonized by death. This is Remo, the elder son beloved of their father, the brother who has, as one brother must, done everything right. Remo the lawyer and amiable snob, friend of every sheep-faced nobleman in Turin. A success, even though he lost a bundle starting up an Internet company in a vague, purposeless imitation of the Americans. The brother who led Orso to Turin, whom Orso sees every day when he is in the city, since their offices are in the same palazzo, and they meet in the evenings to smoke and finish each other's sentences. The brother who, unlike feckless Orso, got married just once, and happily, to a blue-blooded veterinarian from Cuneo with sun-roughened skin, heiress to an estate in the bottomland of the Po, a paradisiacal private nature reserve full of deer and wild boar and horses as friendly as dogs. The popular brother who is a Mason and a Rotarian and a good father and a comically bad skier and a tireless expatiater on the aristocratic connections of his family. The brother who will be dead in three months of a squamous tumor on his left lung.

This is not the story of how Remo discovered the tumor in September and died of it by Christmas—not the appallingly commonplace story of sudden tragedy that explodes a family like a terrorist attack and leaves the survivors groping to realign themselves in the ruins for years afterward. This is the story of Orso and Caterina and how their non-relationship flared into brief half-life with Remo's dying.

So:

The family, as wealthy families can, tries everything: Sloan-Kettering, the Milan Istituto dei Tumori, an Austrian oncologist who has developed a new experimental treatment for squamous tumors. But there is nothing to be done. So thoroughly nothing to be done that a hospital bed is installed in Remo's room in the old pink villa in the bottomland, and a family friend, the chief anesthesiologist at the Molinette hospital, comes daily, first to joke and play cards, and then not to play cards, while the nursing is done in shifts by Remo's wife, Gemma; by Gemma's mother and sister; by Deborah, their faithful *colf*

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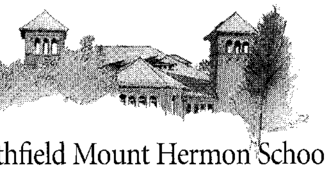

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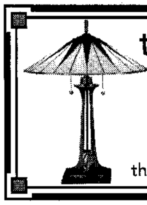

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(Italian) of seventeen years; and by Lili.

Orso is there every day after work. He has put his travelling on hold, and seems to have endless energy, as if the life that is draining out of his brother's body were flowing into his. He organizes the insurance and paperwork necessary to close down Remo's legal offices, and arranges a graceful exit from the failed Internet project in which so many of their friends invested; he settles bureaucratic and practical details for Gemma and Remo's children; he keeps up a phone and e-mail dialogue with an international circle of oncologists; he receives the relatives who arrive from all over Italy; and he sits with Remo in the evenings. Sometimes joking and reminiscing, sometimes in silence as Remo sleeps, sometimes, as time passes, listening to Remo talk in a sibilant lungless whisper. Remo was garrulous of old and can't shake the habit.

At the beginning of November, when the city is filled with chrysanthemums for the Feast of the Dead, and the family's hopes have faded with the season, Remo looks at Orso and whispers, "Remember when we used to take tennis lessons at the Circolo, and I used to bash you over the head with my racquet?"

"All the way to the bus stop. But only if I won."

"I never could stand you beating me. But now—" Remo pleats his face into a ghastly grin and speaks so low that the words are like the ashes of a whisper, "it's I who have won."

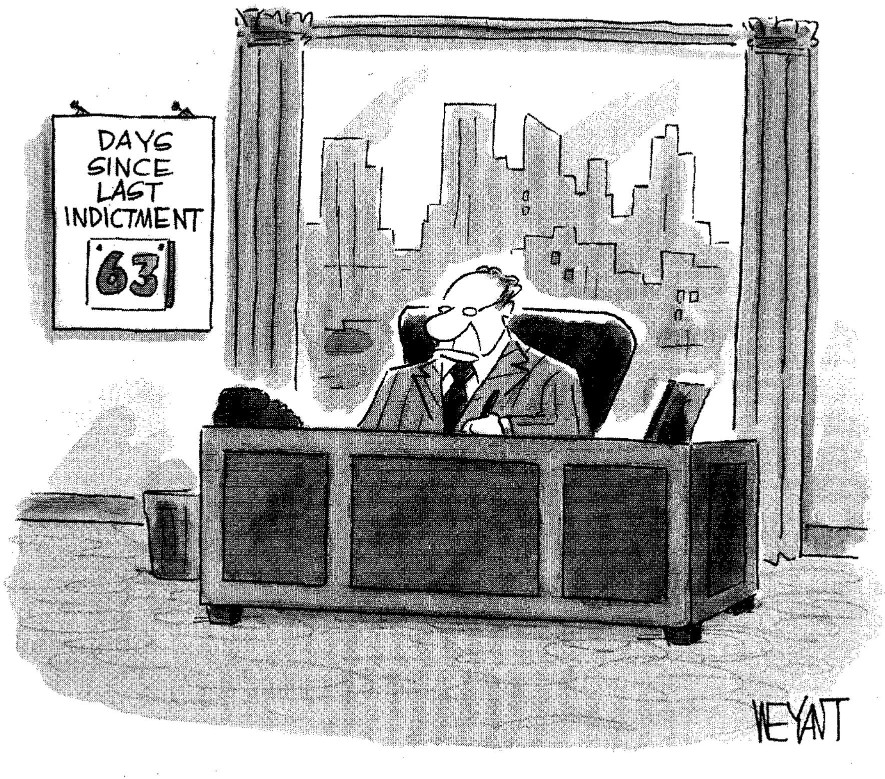
Orso drives back into the city feeling that the darkness has become solid and is crumbling: blackness snowing down to bury him like feathery cinders do when Etna erupts. Twice he has to stop the car because the straight road beside the Po seems to have developed arbitrary curves.

When he gets home, Caterina opens the door. She is dressed in the faded black flowered coverall she adopts when no guests are expected, and a pair of slouchy black leggings and slippers. She looks at him as she has never looked at him before and says, "Perhaps I can help."

"No one can help," Orso hisses furiously.

"I'm a nurse. I have worked in cancer wards in my country where there are no drugs, no equipment, nothing to help anybody. And I have a friend, Giovanni, who is a physical therapist. But more than that—a kind of healer. I don't know how to describe it. He has power in his hands. At least he can make your brother more comfortable."

Orso is vaguely aware that Caterina is talking to him in a far more cultured Italian than he ever imagined she possessed. And that her eyes, no longer downcast in maidenly fashion, are liquid and intense. She stands there in the dark frame of the doorway like one of those faintly repulsive plaster saints or religious puppets with human hair that he has seen in Calabria or Sicily. Their faces are more beautiful than hers, but the expression is the same: tender, yet impersonal, like the angel of death. A terrible lethargy has come over him, and as he nods he feels he wants to fall down in front of her and sleep.



Because the fact is that Orso can't have anything to do with his wife these days. He is conducting a secret boycott of Lili, though he continues to talk to her, to have sex with her, to let her feed him and discreetly sympathize with him, to observe her taking expert loving care of his brother and his brother's family. This sudden harrowing tragedy has shown like nothing else the worth of this small, vibrant woman, his third wife: she is made of pure gold. Yet in the part inside Orso that is most himself, the sanctum where his brother Remo's skull-like grin is now on permanent display like a holy relic, he is full of chill hatred for Lili. Because of her intolerable warmth, calling him to life when he wants to sink underground with Remo. He holds himself apart from her, and she knows it and pardons him, and this makes him icier still.

And, remarkably, after a few visits from Caterina's friend, associate, lover, whatever he is—this Giovanni—Remo seems much better. "We are not talking about miracle cures," says their oncologist friend, who was initially skeptical about expanding the physical therapy that had already been set up for Remo. "But about his comfort and serenity. And both are much improved."

Giovanni is a short, muscular, bearded bald man in his late fifties, a few years older than Orso. He has a booming bass voice with a pretentious accent, and a pair of bulging, hypnotic green eyes. Each time he goes to visit Remo, he is accompanied by another man, Moise, whom he calls a colleague—a tall, distinguished-looking man with brush-cut white hair and an eager, naïve expression. He, Orso discovers, is the driver of the mysterious silver BMW. When, during their first visit to Remo, the two men ask to be alone with the patient and shut the bedroom door, Orso makes a sudden spasmodic movement to join them, but is restrained by Caterina, who has come with them, just for the first visit.

"Don't worry," she says. "They know what they're doing." For the outing, she has put on street clothes: a cheap black leather jacket with a stylish cut, a pair of gray jeans, and the spike-heeled boots mentioned critically by the *portiere's* wife. Her hair is pulled back in a clip, and she seems to be wearing makeup that gives her moonface a coarse glow. If she were taller and prettier she would resemble an action-movie heroine. She speaks with a clipped confidence, a kind of professional expertise that at any other time would have surprised him.

As they wait in the beautiful old farmhouse room that is Remo's study, with its coffered ceiling and its collection of pipes and Juvarran prints, it occurs to Orso, through the fog of his distress, to wonder briefly about the relationship of this curious trio—his *colf* and these two unclassifiable men. Are they both fucking her? Well, of course they are. The men aren't homosexual. Look at the eyes and the muscles on that bald-headed fellow. And, otherwise, why would two obviously middle-class Italians go around with a Romanian maid?

As if she had read his mind, Caterina tells him that they know one another because they are in the same prayer circle, one connected to a Catholic group open to many different currents of thought. The two men have formed a residential community in the countryside near Asti. She says that they also write books on esoteric subjects. Their latest work is about the deeper meaning of the Tower of Babel.

We are in the hands of servants and charlatans, Orso thinks. Faith healers and cultists. How much more desperate can I get?

Yet, strangely enough, he feels at peace sitting there with Caterina. Permitted for a minute to take refuge from all the frantic scrambling for his brother's—for everyone's—survival; to freeze for a moment his awareness of the emblem of despair pinned like a corsage beside his brother's heart.

Afterward, when he hears that Remo has been able to breathe more easily, has passed hours with less morphine, and has taken a few sips of vegetable purée, Orso experiences an extravagant sense of gratitude, which he has never felt before, swelling him like a balloon. An imperial gratitude, which makes him want to heap the two men and Caterina with largesse, treasures, half a kingdom.

"We don't do this for money," Caterina says. "And I shouldn't say 'we.' I haven't done anything." She repeats this as he is driving her back into the city, after they have guided her friends in their silver car to the turnoff for the town near the edge of the Langhe where they live. Remo was sleeping when they left. After a respectful goodbye to Remo's wife, Caterina and the two men conferred briefly in the driveway of Remo's house, then kissed each other ceremoniously on the cheek.

"My friends say they can come twice a week, if that is all right," Caterina continues. "Your brother needs help to keep his muscles from atrophy."

Rage comes over Orso as abruptly as if a red cloak had dropped over his eyes. In his mind he sees Remo as he is now, as he has been trying not to see him: skeletal, his skin no longer pink but bronzed from liver dysfunction, like a thousand-year-old body found in a peat bog.

"Keep him from atrophy?" he shouts. "He's dead already! Did you see him? Did you touch him? It's not for two faggot idiot defrocked-priest assholes to judge whether to keep him alive! It's not for you, you stupid bitch! He weighs forty-five kilos!" He hears himself screaming this at her in a thin breaking voice, and he feels the steering wheel vibrate in his frantic grip as the car swerves. But Caterina, next to him, makes no movement of alarm.

He pulls the car over to the side of the road and stops. It is late on a dark November afternoon, and they are on the two-lane state road between Castagnetto and Turin, in a dilapidated zone of small roadside shops and bars and ugly modern apartments and all the melancholy detritus of provincial life. An old woman sweeping a balcony pauses to give the expensive automobile a suspicious look.

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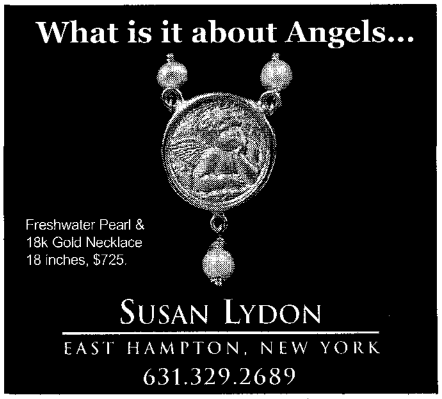

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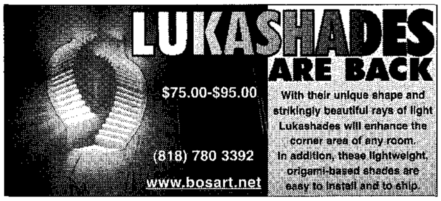

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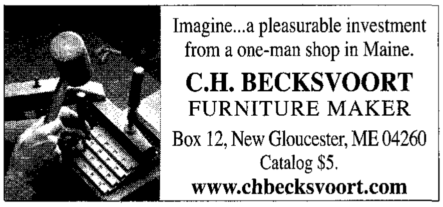

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during the siege of 1706, a fact that Orso knows only because Remo, amateur historian, used to lecture him about troop dispositions and how corpses poisoned the river. Orso can still hear in his mind his brother's bass rumble, the way fashionable obscenities invaded his declarations on historical theory, architecture, and wines ("That remodelled Juvarran façade is a cocksucking piece of shit"). He can imagine Remo as he almost always was at this hour on weekends: ensconced with friends in the cozy sitting room that seemed like an emblem of his happy marriage, sipping a Barbaresco grown by yet another of his friends, boring everyone with his amiable monologues, and punctuating his speech with theatrical flourishes of the cigarettes that would eventually kill him.

The pain Orso feels at these thoughts is unbelievable. So physical he thinks for a moment that he is having a heart attack. He has always been a hypochondriac. Now for a minute he thinks he is going to die, and he realizes how ironic it is that he is going to beat the intensely competitive Remo at his own game. He can imagine his friends grief-stricken but also impressed by a certain feat of symmetry: two brothers at once.

But then the pain fades into the enigmatic problem of grief. Of having to live and stay behind. And he is sitting with the motor running and the car still in gear at the side of the state road, next to a row of recycling bins overflowing with plastic bags and boxes of rubbish. At some point, he has bent forward and rested his head on the steering wheel, shaking with dry sobs.

Now Caterina does several things. She leans over and puts the car in neutral and then turns the key to shut down the motor and turns off the headlights. Then she unbuckles her seat belt. And, pulling up her legs so that she is almost kneeling on the seat, she reaches awkwardly over the gearbox and with a certain difficulty puts her arms around him.

She says nothing, and when Orso later hazily remembers the moment he has an impression only of silence made palpable. Silence as a living element, mixed with the feeling of the cold leather of her jacket and the strength of the arms inside it, with the banal scent of a popular perfume that Orso has smelled on his secretary, and with the curious asexual coldness of another scent, of hair and skin, that must have been the body odor Lili complained about. Caterina and Orso stay like that until a bitter comfort creeps into his body, a kind of resolve in despair that he understands is native to this girl. When Orso—out of the ingrained habit of embracing in cars with younger women—moves his hand upward to her breast, she pushes it away with a firm but not unfriendly gesture. And when she finally releases him and he sits back with a long exhalation of breath, the windows are fogged over, as one sees in parks when people have been making love in cars.

As Caterina settles back into her own seat, she mutters something.

"What?" Orso asks, amazed that he can form words.

"I said you have to have faith. In my own language. *Trebuie sa avem credinta. Credinta* is faith—it's very close to the Italian word, *credere.*"

"Say something else in your language," he asks, like a child.

"All right," she says patiently. "My name is Caterina. *Ma numesc Caterina.* I am a Romanian girl. *Sunt o fata din Romania. Fata*—girl, *ragazza.* Do you know," she adds, with a bleak little chuckle, "that you are the only Italian who has ever asked me about my language?"

"It's a beautiful language," Orso says blankly, and this limp compliment seems to give him the strength to start the car.

They are silent for the rest of the drive. Caterina speaks only once, when they turn onto the long boulevard that borders the Valentino Park and see the roadside prostitutes lined up for the early-evening shift. Bundled unalluringly against the autumnal chill, some of them standing beside small fires, they are, as Orso's friend Giorgio observed, all young and pretty and white. Hardly turning her head to look at them, Caterina says, "They are Romanian girls, too."

When Remo dies, on the night of Santo Stefano, twenty-four hours after a huge gloomy family Christmas dinner held at Orso's house, many things come to an end. Remo's

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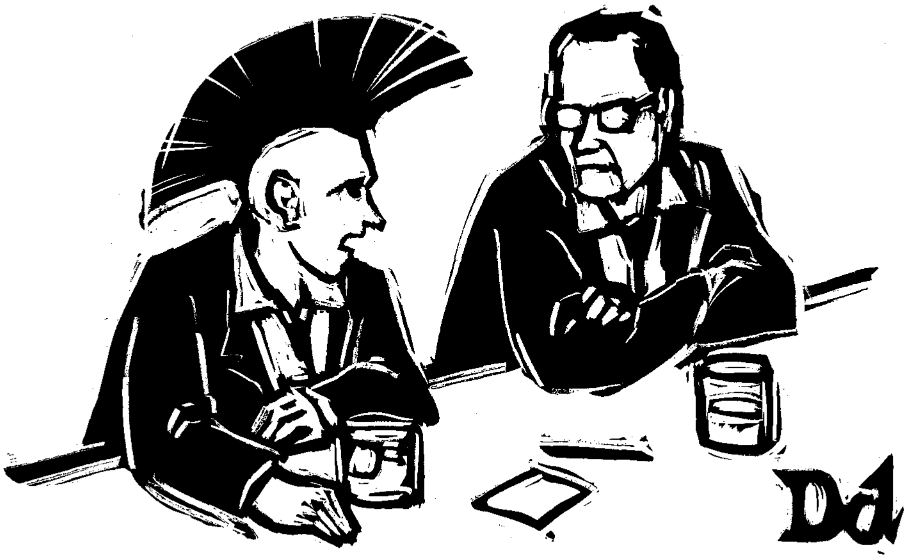


*"It's a period piece."*

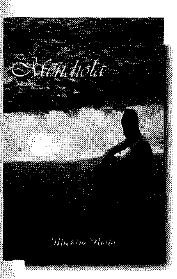
• •

legendary marriage, for one. The brave Gemma looks oddly diminished, staggering slightly as she walks, as if she had suffered a small stroke or lost an actual limb. There is the dissolution of the group of old friends who used to meet at Remo's house. And, for Orso, the conclusion of the competition that has absorbed him since he was born. His extended childhood has finished, the curtain has fallen on his role as a younger brother. Returning home at dawn from a night spent in the various numbing chores that follow a death, he walks in the fog among the horse chestnuts and gingerbread mansions near his apartment and grapples with the fact, like an unwieldy tool in his hand, that he is now the head of the family.

He feels the weight of this at the funeral, in the neoclassical spaces of the Gran Madre di Dio—a church that Remo, enthusiast of the baroque, always detested—surrounded by a horde of relatives and Remo's friends in a sea of furs and cashmere overcoats. Seated between Gemma and Lili, watching his first ex-wife try to steal the scene by sobbing theatrically, smelling the incense, listening to the tearful address of the bishop—another friend of Remo's—and wondering automatically, as one does at funerals, when the dead person is going to walk in, Orso feels as if he had inherited the job of ringmaster in a particularly sombre circus. Later, it is only the weight of the oak on his shoulders, the attempt to stay in step with the other coffin bearers, that gives him an estimation of the amount of grief he has hoarded up to consume in private. That and a face he sees while passing down the church steps and through the crowd. Caterina, white as paper, eyes rimmed with red in a way that touches him strangely: an icon of his own mourning. She must have taken the tram from the apartment; no one thought to invite her. Their eyes meet, then brush past.

The other thing that ends at this time is the happy domestic situation at Orso's house. The equilibrium and complicity—the all-important "collaboration"—between Lili and Caterina begins to disintegrate almost immediately after the episode in the car. Lili is no fool: she knows infidelity, the important kind, when she smells it, and she, who has pardoned every bumbling sexual misdemeanor on Orso's part, cannot tolerate the climate of understanding that has sprung up between her husband and the *colf.*

It is not, Lili argues with herself, as if they were exchanging glances—not as if there were the electricity of suppressed mutual desire. Caterina is still satisfyingly unattractive. She is clearly in love with Orso, but then



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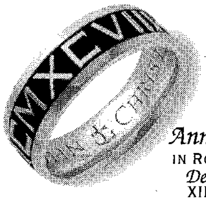

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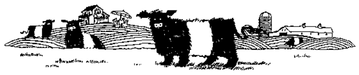

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almost all maids who are not mistreated are in love with the master of the house.

But there is an atmosphere of comprehension, of sympathy, of mysterious tolerance, which, Lili thinks, should not exist. Not between Caterina and Orso, now that Orso is wandering in the wreck of his love for his brother. Not while Orso is still, as Lili knows, conducting his secret boycott of his wife.

The upshot is that the girl, Caterina, *la ragazza*, has to go. As all *colfs* eventually do, whether it is to get married or because they are lazy or inept or in disgrace, or because they have found more money or an easier situation elsewhere. Or because—and this is rare—they have finished their stint in the foreign country and are going back home with their fortune.

So in late January, with Orso safely in China, Lili speaks gently to Caterina. She tells her that she and Orso are making a change and that they will need the attic room. And because they will have less space they want a woman who comes in by the hour. There is, of course, no haste. Caterina will have sterling references and the *tredicesima* and all the severance pay that the union is so strict about for foreign workers. And a month to find another job. Perhaps they can even help her get her Italian certification as a nurse. Orso has a friend in the Ministry of Health.

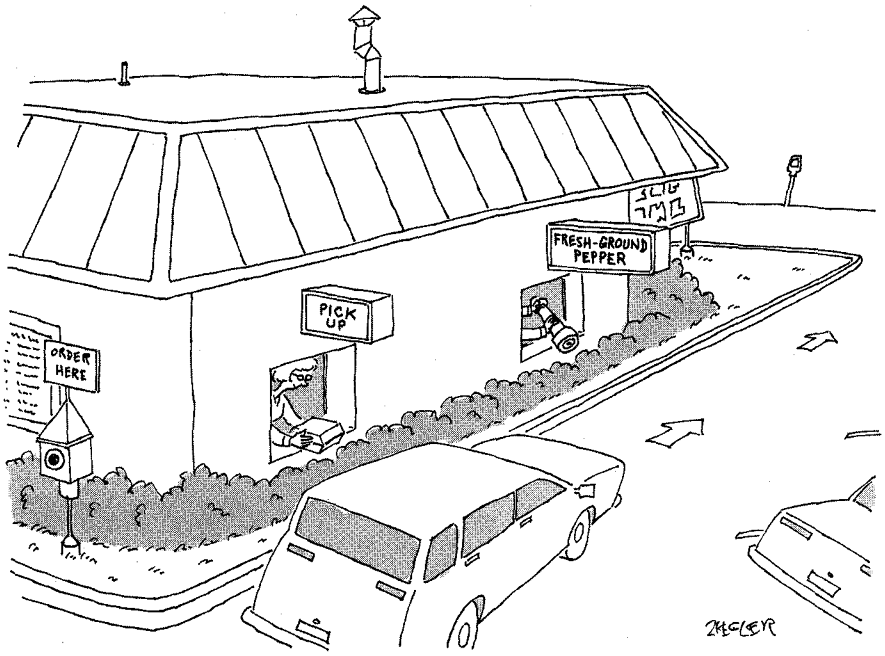
Caterina stands in her old black flowered coverall and black leggings, her face expressionless. "*Signora*," she says finally, "I've done nothing wrong."

Lili reassures her. She praises Caterina's abilities and gives her a present: a beautiful freshwater-pearl necklace. "For when you marry," Lili says.

"Marry?" Caterina echoes faintly, the necklace dangling from her hand.

The two women avoid each other's eyes.

And in fact Lili soon appreciates her own wisdom in letting Caterina go, because over the next month, Caterina's last with them, the girl seems to go slightly mad. Radio Maria, always an annoyance, now blasts Rosaries and choral Masses through the house at full volume, and Caterina seems genuinely surprised when asked to turn it down. Looking at the shopping receipts, Lili finds with amazement that the girl is going through two jugs of bleach a week, doing the laundry in solutions so strong that the linen sheets develop holes and colored shirts and jeans are ruined. She uses it on the floors and windows, too, until one day Lili comes home to find the dog whimpering in the entryway and the entire house enveloped in the unbreathable stink of chlorine. By accident, Caterina puts Lili's favorite black crêpe-de-chine dress in the washing machine and shrinks it to the size of a child's garment. Reprimanded for all this, Caterina wrings her hands and moans, "It's because I'm so stupid!"



On Valentine's Day, Caterina races to the empty mailbox fifteen times, and then walks around with a tragic face. She takes to spending her own money on flowers: big bunches of lilies of the valley bought at an exorbitant price from the florist on Corso Vittorio, which she keeps in a jar on the kitchen table where she eats her solitary meals. When they check the sites she has visited on the computer, they find chat rooms on obsession and hypnosis.

"Get rid of her right away!" Enrica, the *portiere's* wife, says to Lili. "All these Eastern European girls are witches, even if they don't know it. You'll find your hair falling out, and worse."

"Caterina honestly doesn't mean harm," Lili tells Orso on the phone. "It's like something is acting through her, like she's possessed."

Orso grunts noncommittally. Though at first he objected to the idea of sending Caterina away, it seems much easier to give Lili what she wants. He doesn't want to hear about feminine craziness. And he feels a visceral distaste at the idea of two women at odds under his roof. Why is it that women can never get along, as they did in harems and old-fashioned Chinese households? Since Remo died, Orso has deliberately spent a lot of time out of the country and has revived his affair with Barbara Yi in Suzhou. "Give her a little something extra and send her away early," he suggests, finally. "But be sure," he adds, with something like a twinge of guilt, "be sure that you find someone else who understands my shirts."

With her excellent references, Caterina immediately finds a job, at double her previous pay, nursing a rich old woman in the Monferrato countryside. She leaves Orso and Lili's house on friendly terms, and in its usual state of gleaming orderliness, especially the attic room, which looks as if it had never been lived in. As is correct, she leaves behind her uniforms, both formal and the coveralls for dirty work. The only other things she leaves behind are the black lava Madonna that Orso gave her and the pearl necklace from Lili, both of which are placed in the center of the attic-room desk.

Thirteen months later, Orso encounters Caterina's friend Giovanni the Healer (so Orso thinks of him) in a parking lot. They are outside one of the huge chain sporting-goods stores on the periphery of the city, where Orso has gone to shop for skis at a clearance sale. Giovanni, bald and muscular as ever, is loading a shiny new racing bike into the back of the familiar silver BMW. They greet each other, and Orso winces inwardly at the excessive, vaguely sacerdotal sympathy in the booming voice of the other man, who is wearing a colorful polo shirt and tight jeans that show off his boxy thighs, and who continues to affect an upper-class accent. Unwillingly, Orso allows himself to be embraced, to be addressed with the intimate *tu*. In the process, he has to admit that there is some unusual element, some power, in Giovanni's touch.

Orso asks for news of Caterina, and Giovanni informs him that the old woman in Monferrato was so disagreeable that Caterina left the job after a few months, took part-time unregistered work in clinics here and there, and then disappeared from view. He and his dear friends in the sacred community, as he calls them, have heard nothing further. He knows that she was having some trouble with her documents. She may have had to go back to Romania. Giovanni does not seem overly concerned. "A sweet girl," he says, with an unmistakable note of condescension, and then asks Orso whether he and Lili might not enjoy attending a special alternative Easter celebration out at the community center.

Driving home, having extricated himself by giving a large Easter contribution to Giovanni, who is no longer shy about taking money, Orso reflects that Caterina, of all the people he has ever known, is the most alone—without friends, without family, and not even cared for by the charismatic cult that everyone had assumed absorbed strays like her. Giovanni and the others, he thinks, would have taken part of her modest salary, and probably used her indifferently for sex, before letting her go in favor of prettier girls or richer prey.

And yet Caterina had brought what was best, what was genuinely divine among all the dross in Giovanni, to help Remo. She had brought comfort to Orso's brother, who would hardly have recognized her face, and she had held Orso in her arms. All for nothing, or for the kind of love that in its extreme humility expects no return. For a minute, driving along, he feels hot and cold with shame at the way he treated her. But then he seems to hear Remo's voice, as he does quite often these days, oracular, slightly pompous, saying things he never said but which sound like him: "What more could you have done, after all, old man? And in the end, from where I am, does it matter?"

Still, he finds himself wondering about Caterina, long after Lili has found an excellent pair of Peruvian girls, sisters, to come in alternately, morning and evening. The attic room has been turned into a computer room, and Orso and Lili are, in fact, much more tranquil now that they are alone in the house at night.

Maids, even the most feckless, are always reappearing on the scene, whether they are asking for new references or sending scribbled greetings on postcards from seaside resorts. But never a word comes from Caterina, and the completeness of her disappearance is a demonstration, Orso thinks, of how the humble of the world can sink from view. He pictures her in a convent somewhere, or in a nightmarish Romanian hospital, caring for incurables, who in the democracy of their misery look passionately on her plain face. Sometimes, driving past the prostitutes along the park road, he feels a thrilled apprehension at the idea that he might see her among them, though these pitiable girls are very young, almost children, and far prettier than Caterina.

And on Thursday afternoons, when he crosses the city and passes tram stops crowded with foreign *colfs* of all colors celebrating their afternoon off, he sometimes thinks he sees a round, flat face, a doll's stiff figure, a crown of too thick hair. Likewise at night, returning home with Lili, from a dinner or a party, he studies the constellation of attic lights twinkling under the low Turin skies. At these moments he feels himself recalling her words in the idle persistent way that one jingles loose change in one's pocket: *Ma numesc Caterina. Fata. Ragazza. Credinta.* Faith. ♦

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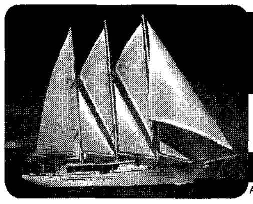

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# THE CRITICS

## BOOKS

# ALL ABOUT ABISH

*The cerebral experimentalist gets personal.*

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Walter Abish, though he has published relatively late and little, projects a distinct presence in contemporary letters, in part because of the black triangular eye patch that distinguishes his photograph on book jackets. His three novels, three collections of short stories, and lone book of poems have won a number of grants and awards (a MacArthur Foundation grant, the PEN / Faulkner Award of 1981) and high praise from such disparate spirits as Harold Bloom, Richard Howard, and Wendy Lesser. Born in Vienna in 1931, Abish, with his mother and father, fled Hitler's Europe in 1940 for Shanghai, and in 1949 left what was shortly to become Mao's China for Israel. He came to New York City in 1957, and by the early seventies had begun to publish English-language short stories in cutting-edge magazines like *Confrontation*, *The Element*, *Extensions*, and *Statements: New Fiction*. These stories partook of American absurdism, à la Donald Barthelme, Guy Davenport, Robert Coover: effects of cryptic collage, hostile whimsy, and learned fancy were presented in a clipped, deadpan style. The tone served, it seemed, to insulate the writer from taking the events described too seriously. Popular culture, so amusingly appropriated in post-abstract painting, flavored the writer's vision; images filtered in from the glamorous, trendy realms of film, television, and photography. The papery worlds of news items, maps, and classic literature were shuffled together carefreely. For instance, in Abish's first collection, "Minds Meet" (1975), the story "How the Comb Gives a Fresh Meaning to the Hair" conceives of Marcel Proust living in Albuquerque, where retarded children, cabbies, Pueblo Indians, and a young couple called Mr. and Mrs. Dip flit through short paragraphs bearing titles like "Fingernails" and "Marcel's Childhood." In Abish's second collection, "In the Future Perfect" (1977), several stories ("Ardor / Awe / Atrocity" and "In So Many Words") adorn narratives of a flat American sordidness with alphanumeric games, Teutonically rigorous in their ingenuity, that addle the reader's brain like the insistent chimes of a canzone or a villanelle. What the New World means to Abish is restless sex wed to consumerist luxury—a quest for material perfection summed up in his aphorism "Above all America fears the limp prick."

Abish's first novel, "Alphabetical Africa" (1974), prankishly takes the reader on an intricate trek through the alphabet, with the first and last chapters both confined to words beginning with "a" and the chapters in between accumulatingly using and then losing words beginning with the remaining twenty-five letters. Of this tortuous opus (akin to certain verbal experiments of Raymond Queneau and Georges Perec), Abish helpfully volunteered on the dust jacket:

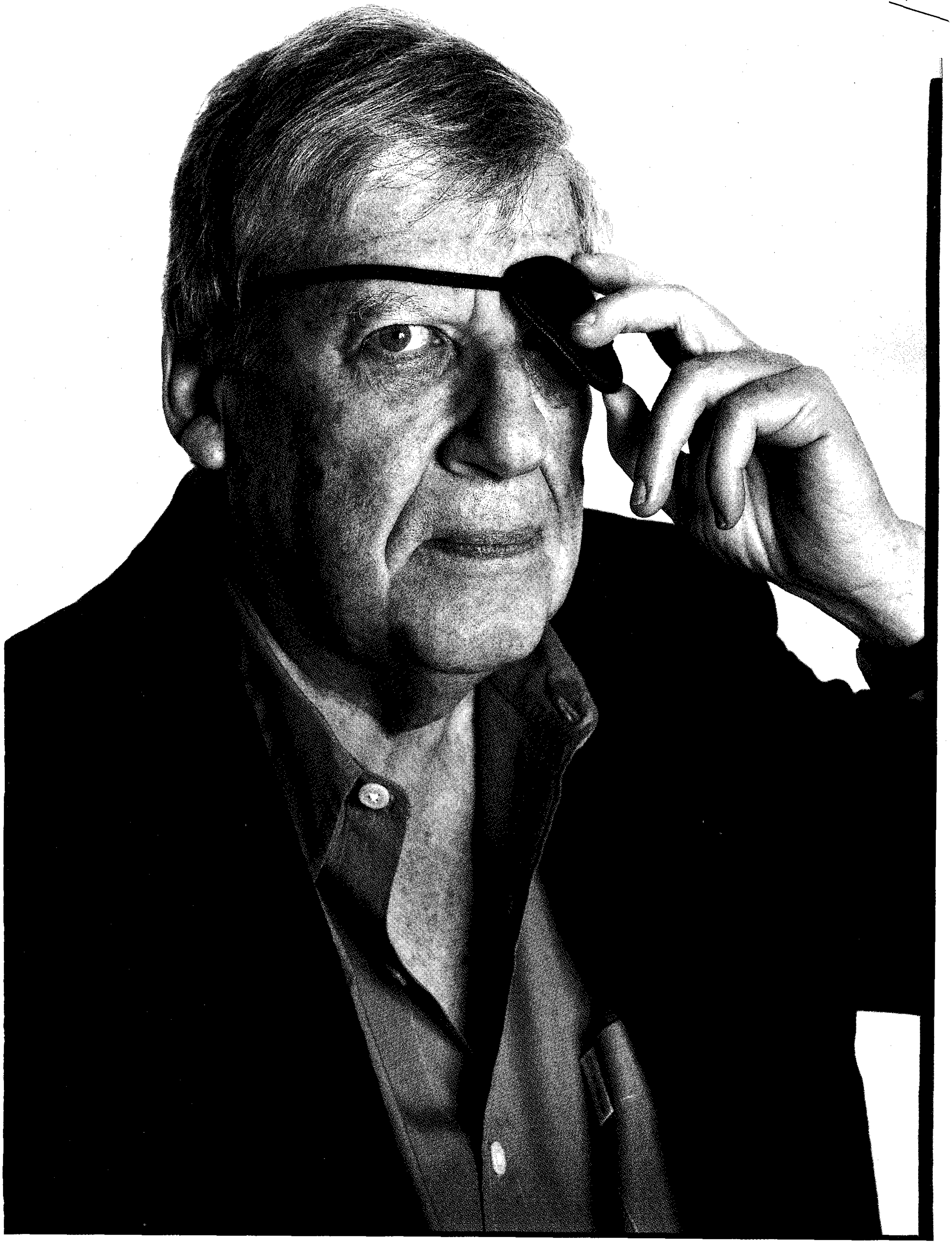
> Feeling a distrust of the understanding that is intrinsic to any communication, I decided to write a book in which my distrust became a determining factor upon which the flow of the narrative was largely predicated.

Distrust—a dubiety of commitment and avowal—is his ground note. His most admired work, the novel "How German Is It" (1980), harnesses postmodern verbal foolery to a thriller plot and a passionately distrustful concern with modern Germany. Written before his actual return to the German-speaking lands that his immediate family (but not all his relatives) escaped in the late thirties, the novel imagines an Americanized, prospering, democratic Germany sealed over the Nazi past like a deceptively smooth scab. The clean, chic, well-planned new community of Brumholdstein, named after a Heidegger-like philosopher called Ernst Brumhold, has been erected on the bulldozed site of a concentration camp in the town, formerly known as Durst. At one point, symbolically enough, a broken sewage pipe uncovers a mass grave, which emits a terrible stench and is finally cleared away by the government agency that deals with such remnants of the unsavory past. The characters, most of them too young to have participated in the Nazi regime, are nevertheless not at ease. The husbands are compulsively unfaithful and the women unnervingly compliant. The old class distinctions and snobberies still hold, beneath the surface of democracy. Urban terrorist groups recruited from the middle class nag the society with murders and explosions, and "Germany . . . its history, its achievements, its literature, its amazing economic recovery" has something inexpungeably suspect about it. Its very glossiness and timetable order and even the beauty of the summer in which most of the action takes place seem to mask something.

The novel's main characters, the brothers Helmuth and Ulrich Hargenau, have many reasons for happiness, as a successful architect and novelist respectively. Further, they are (apparently) the sons of an anti-Nazi martyr; their fa-

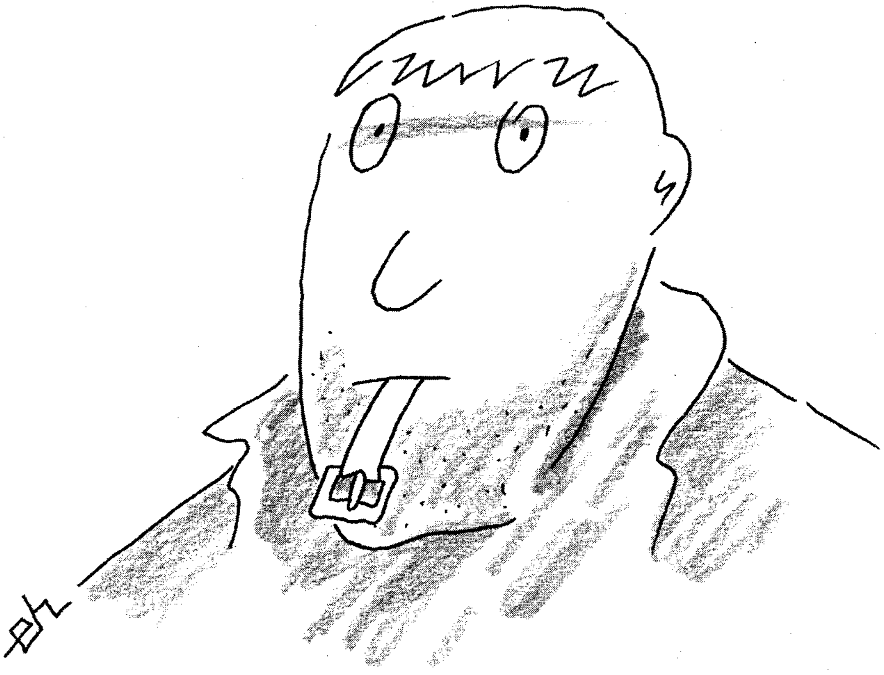
PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

*Walter Abish, New York City, January, 2004.*



ther, Ulrich von Hargenau, participated in the 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler and was shot by a firing squad. But Helmuth, so handsome and efficient, has a manicky self-careless streak that produces too many affairs, too many pointed allusions to the Nazi past of respectable families, and too deep an association with a band of motorcycle-riding thugs. Ulrich, the writer, is more recessive and kindly, but he nurses a futile love for his wife, Paula, a terrorist whom he saved from prison by testifying against the eight other members of her gang. He receives threats in the mail and has gingerly returned to Germany after six months in Paris. He encounters a great range of plausible contemporary Germans: the plump, nimble-minded mayor of Brumholdstein; his lean and faithless wife, Vin; Helmuth's perfect wife, Maria, whom he abandons; their chatty and invincibly curious ten-year-old daughter, Gisela, named after her mother's close friend, who is half of a swish young couple identified only as Gisela and Egon; the attractive, insatiably intrusive photographer Rita Tropf-Ulmwehrt; the waiter Franz Metz, the Hargenaus' former servant and a traumatized Wehrmacht veteran who is building a matchstick model of the vanished concentration camp at Durst; his loutish son Obbie; the not-so-prim unmarried schoolteacher Anna Heller; the morose and churlish bookseller Jonke; and a number of others, all rooted in a highly circumstantial small-city landscape. Though the free-and-easy sexual interchanges savor of the swinging Manhattan of the sixties and seventies, and the mouth-wateringly specific German pastries may owe something to Abish's Viennese boyhood, his feat of imagination makes a persuasive match for the realistically transcribed Germanys of, say, Heinrich Böll and Martin Walser. The novel disdains to tie up all of its many threads, and has some of the improvisatory shagginess of Abish's shaggy-dog short stories, but it is given coherence and force by a real animus and a real question: How could the Germans have committed these unspeakable acts? How uniquely German was the Holocaust?

Abish has been rather quiet in the quarter century since this compelling, prize-winning, fully stocked novel appeared: in 1990, he published a third short-story collection, "99: the New Meaning," a limited edition of five collagist stories, and in 1993 a novel, "Eclipse Fever," set mostly in Mexico, with American and Mexican characters. Now he has issued a wry, contemplative, and oblique experiment in autobiography, "Double Vision: A Self-Portrait" (Knopf; $24). Chapters of reminiscence



*Originally, Watches Were Worn on the Ankle, Then Around the Neck, Until It Was Finally Decided to Carry Them in the Safety of the Wearer's Mouth.*

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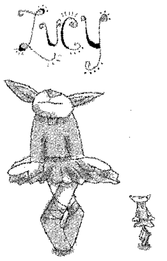

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headed "The Writer-to-Be" alternate with diaristic jottings from his contemporary self, "The Writer." He sketches his life as a boy in Austria and as a young man in China but says little about his adult years in New York, or exactly when he arrived, or how he supported himself. He does not explain how he came to wear an eye patch. The fully fledged "Writer" is seen largely in terms of his visits, in the wake of "How German Is It," to Germany and Austria. His parentage and early years are quickly disposed of, in a nervous style of notation and existential questions:

> The oppressiveness of good manners. The emotional repression. My discontent. That's why my head is shaped the way it is. That's why my eyes are blue. We are talking about genes. About inherited traits. The way I smile—reluctantly. . . . Is there no freedom at all from the family? The efficiently cool and remote mother and the energetic businessman father. Their distinctly separate worlds, their separate concerns collide uneasily in my brain.

He alludes, a few pages on, to his "incessant trigeminal headaches," as if his parents were still colliding in his head. They wound up, he reveals in "Double Vision," in St. Petersburg, Florida—survivors who had the wit and the wherewithal to maneuver themselves and their only child out of Hitler's reach. Their virtues are acknowledged a bit stiffly. Abish mentions rebellious behavior on his part without being specific; he confides that he provided his parents "far too little satisfaction, far too little pleasure," and that he suspected his mother of not finding her role "in any way pleasing or fulfilling." His father, he feels, loved him wholeheartedly, and, a perfume manufacturer, brought to the house the enchantment of "those tiny, elegantly shaped bottles snugly encased in their pale yellow boxes bearing the name Molinard as well their poetic fragrances: Ambre, Iles d'Or, Habitana, Fleurettes, Orval. Whenever my father would pull out his handkerchief, the entire room, within seconds, was filled with the delicate fragrance of those evocative names."

So it was a cool, qualified, scented childhood idyll that ended when, in March of 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria. Abish's recollections, diffident to this point, become vivid:

> Soon after, the streets of Vienna took on the appearance of a staged spectacle—one of those beloved operettas that skirt reality—for the frenzied, flag-waving Viennese did not merely proclaim their solidarity with Germany and embrace their Austrian-born Hitler; rather, they embraced the Anschluss, seizing the opportunity to display those tantalizing new emblems, the paraphernalia of Nazism, and in a state of exuberance perform a celebratory dance. . . . A breathless encounter, as the Viennese—whose dialect, after all, is replete with double meanings—absorbed with a shudder of ecstasy the aesthetics of the swastika.

An oft-told historical tale acquires freshness through these six-year-old eyes. Abish's mother was thoroughly assimilated and had "sought, if not to disassociate, then to distance herself from the Jewish ceremonies," while the father's attempt to communicate their Jewishness to his son remained "ill defined" and "perplexing." The inevitable persecutions descended almost lightly at first; the day after Kristallnacht, Abish's father reported to work as usual. When he was arrested, he was vouched for by a businessman who owed him money and was released. The S.A. men who evicted them from their apartment were courteous and low-key, and Abish's mother packed with her usual calm and efficiency. Abish was permitted to carry away two small toys. That the Gentile society approvingly stood by while, elsewhere in Vienna, Jews were made to scrub the sidewalk with toothbrushes is no mystery:

> I suspect the eventuality of a dividend, a payoff, as a result of this state-generated public debasement wasn't lost on the gleeful spectators. How could the trickle-down rewards—in the form of academic advancement, the elimination of business competition, the forced sale of businesses, not to mention the vacated apartments, the auctions of the possessions the Viennese Jews were forced to leave behind—not animate the society?

Small wonder that a child exposed to such a turn of events would continue to distrust appearances, however prosperous and benign, and see with a wary double vision. In "How German Is It," the mayor of Brumholdstein, commenting upon a carpet that a guest has admired, idly brags, "My father acquired it before the war. Lots of things were quite reasonable before the war, I'm told." The carpet has an abyss beneath it.

When, in the wake of publishing "How German Is It," Abish meets real Germans and travels to Germany, distrust is the mood on both sides. "Double

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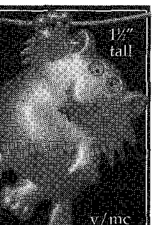

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Vision" describes how, in New York, he meets, through friends, a visiting German chemical-company executive, "the fixed smile on his sharp-featured face like an unaccustomed adornment," who declares that Abish's novel infuriated him: "Alone, the incorrectly spelled German words!" Abish is interviewed by a German journalist, "trim, impeccably dressed, not a blond hair out of place," who, unable to get him to admit that his novel was "the Jew's revenge," has trouble finishing her article, because, she says, "I suspect that deep inside your gut you harbor altogether different thoughts and emotions." Driven by another journalist from Amsterdam into Germany for the first time, Abish distrusts the scenery along the Rhine: "Everything on view seemed slightly exaggerated . . . almost staged—like a reproduction of the original." He asks himself, "At what stage in the reconstruction of Germany, at what point in this tremendous effort will the turbulent past fade, enabling the visitor to Germany to once again view the society with that credulous gaze of a nineteenth-century traveller?" Never, for this visitor. He sees tidy houses out of "How German Is It," "so orderly, so clean, so characteristically German," though the border guard is less neatly dressed than he expected. The "Wagnerian Germany" of craggy castles and dark woods that his host seems to want to present fails to register with Abish, who discovers that the Pentax with which he has been "nailing [his] first impressions of Germany" is empty of film.

On a later excursion, as he employs his rusty German in dialogue with fellow-writers and cultural operatives, the empty-camera feeling persists. He doesn't like his editor, Gunther Maschke, a former left-winger turned right, and rejects the hotel that has been chosen; at a party he counterattacks the somewhat anti-Semitic prattle of an actor who petulantly asks, "Must we still feel guilt? Hasn't the time come when we are able to speak our minds?" Not infrequently, the guest writer provokes "that by now familiar wisp of a smile I've noted on faces whenever a ticklish subject is brought up." Rarely does he hear "a welcome, unequivocal voice of condemnation," as he does from a schoolteacher leading his students through the camp at Dachau: "*Das war eine Todesfabrik!*—"That was

---

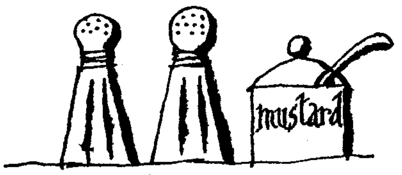
# BRIEFLY NOTED

Someone to Run With, *by David Grossman, translated from the Hebrew by Vered Almog and Maya Gurantz (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24).* In Grossman's latest novel, which tumbles along the dusty streets of Jerusalem, adolescent idealism and angst keep the characters on the move. Assaf, a shy misfit, embarks upon a quixotic journey with a lost dog to find its mistress. Tamar, a caustic fifteen-year-old who can sing Mozart and Leonard Cohen on demand, runs away from home to find the criminals who have ensnared her older brother. A young street musician, in the grip of a heroin habit as formidable as his talent, stumbles through his routines with death close behind. The resulting picaresque is a cross between "Run Lola Run" and "Oliver Twist," and as the reader waits for these solitary odysseys to intersect, the urgency becomes almost unbearable. Grossman evokes teen-age nobility and self-hatred in all its pimply particularity, while slyly suggesting that the arduous quest for connections should never be outgrown.

The Swallows of Kabul, *by Yasmina Khadra, translated from the French by John Cullen (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $18.95).* Two men struggle to keep their sanity in a brief, despairing novel written pseudonymously by a former Algerian Army officer. Before the destruction wrought by the Soviet war and Taliban rule, Mohsen was an affluent merchant; now he wanders the streets while his beautiful wife is confined to home and burka. Atiq, a volatile ex-mujahideen, guards the prisoners awaiting public execution. One day, Mohsen stops to observe the public stoning of a prostitute, one of Atiq's charges. Caught up in the frenzy, he joins in, initiating a series of tragic events. Khadra's prose is gentle and precise, but the violent climax of the book makes a powerful point about what can happen to a man when "the light of his conscience has gone out."

The Marketplace of Revolution, *by T. H. Breen (Oxford; $30).* Arguing that the revolution of 1776 was the first in history based on evaporating brand loyalty, Breen draws a rich portrait of a Colonial society saturated with what Samuel Adams called "the Baubles of Britain": everything from fine china to Cheshire cheese. The colonists were divided by religion and industry, but they shared a common identity as consumers of British products—and, increasingly, as wronged consumers, once Britain levied exorbitant tariffs and used America as a dumping ground for surplus goods. Tea, the Coca-Cola of its day, became a symbol of imperial overreach. Colonists reacted with what Breen sees as the Revolution's brilliant innovation: the consumer boycott. Benjamin Franklin told Parliament that, while the pride of Americans had been "to indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great-Britain," it was now "to wear their old cloaths over again." Because they shopped together, Americans could rebel together.

The Great Pretenders, *by Jan Bondeson (Norton; $25.95).* In nineteenth-century Russia, many people believed that a certain Siberian hermit was really the late Tsar Alexander I. After the French Revolution, several men gained followings by claiming to be the surviving son of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. Bondeson, a British rheumatologist with an engaging sideline in the more sensational byways of history, sifts evidence with a keen understanding of the difficulty of establishing truth: "Kings and queens are mere mortals, but it is difficult to kill off a good story." DNA testing has felled a few hypotheses, but mysteries persist, in part, Bondeson believes, because they are bound up with larger questions of national identity. He also writes about the not-so-great pretenders: the long-lost relatives who show up just in time to contest the family fortune. These trials provided high drama in Victorian England, reaching a peak of silliness when one witness testified that Charles Dickens, between books, acted as a pimp for the eccentric Duke of Portland.



a death factory!" But at Dachau, too, Abish feels an "inexplicable detachment," a failure to feel, "even though, for all I knew, members of my own family were entombed here." He can't shake what others criticize as the "tendency to overinterpret everything German through the limited prism of the Hitler years." Waking each day to songbirds, he wonders if the concentration-camp inmates heard them, and finds, in the memoir of a Buchenwald inmate, that "the acrid, poisonous stench of burning corpses drove the birds away."

The two extended sections devoted to his years in China and in Israel have their interest, of course, as his evolving awareness prepares him for a future as a writer. In China, at the age of fifteen, he enters "a mazelike building in which Chinese jugglers, puppeteers, actors, magicians, singsong girls, and storytellers in long gowns and carrying folding fans entertained the audience," and realizes that he is the only non-Chinese in the crowd. His friends show no curiosity about this place of entertainment, and China itself, the vast country that is their host, is ignored in their school textbooks. Shortly before Abish's departure, as the approach of Communist armies emboldens young Chinese, he is attacked on the street and chased by three of them. "I couldn't even bring myself to mention the assault to anyone—suddenly, to discover myself to be the enemy!" Several years earlier, when American servicemen helped oust Shanghai's Japanese occupiers, he had been enchanted by our brand names, our movies, our hit parade. American sailors, "mostly good natured if somewhat bored, still possessed the attractive shine of all things American." But they, too, suffered from a "total lack of curiosity." The writer-to-be is by nature curious, and in Israel he continues his self-education, both romantic and literary. He gets a part-time job with the United States Information Agency and prepares for a career as an architect. He finds, after many false starts, that he can read Proust with pleasure. He has a serious affair, and even gets married, but just so that his bride, Bilha, can be spared the obligatory year's military service. The formality over, they soon divorce, and yet he visits her at their old apartment, "determined that nothing . . . spark a Proustian recollection." There is more here than is being said, and the Israel chapter is the vaguest and least memorable. Abish's heart, at least for the length of this autobiography, is engaged by Germany, that deadly and dislikable land. In describing the Sabras, the native-born Israelis, whose famous directness and candor seem to him simply discourtesy, he cannot resist adding, "Ironically, it was in Germany, in the eighties—the last place in the world that I expected to be reminded of Israel—that I encountered a similar bluntness and lack of tact."

In 1987, Abish spent six months in Berlin, as a guest of the German Academy Exchange Service. He confides, "I travelled blindly to the walled-in city, quite unprepared to dismantle the wall I had erected within myself." This final installment of "The Writer" chapters bristles with disagreeable little encounters:

> A Berlin bus driver wordlessly indicated his displeasure with the way I positioned my ticket on the smallish metal tray by pointedly straightening it before he stamped it—all the while glaring furiously at me. What German lesson was being communicated?

When, pragmatically, he crosses a deserted street against the light, a motorist stops to loudly upbraid him; Abish, adopting local manners, shouts back, "What business is it of yours?" and is told, in an aggrieved tone, "You're wearing an eye patch. . . . Your eyesight is impaired. You might get hurt!" He finds that artists, critics, and writers he encounters "scarcely differ from the ones I know in New York" yet seem "weighed down by an incommunicable mental fatigue." The thriving, pre-Hitler German-Jewish community has left "a diffuse and attenuated memory" in contemporary Germans, though mansions and department stores once owned by Jews still stand. At parties, he feels approached as a curiosity, "a Jew at the party," and a fellow-writer, Klaus Stiller, "cannot refer to Jews without an involuntary twinkle in his eyes. I can only conclude that for many people Jews must still be such an oddity." Though Abish is warned, "Don't go that way. It'll destroy you," he accumulates in Berlin a stack of books on Germany and genocide, including diaries kept during the Nazi era, which are with rare exception devoid of any reference to the Jews and their doom. He ex-

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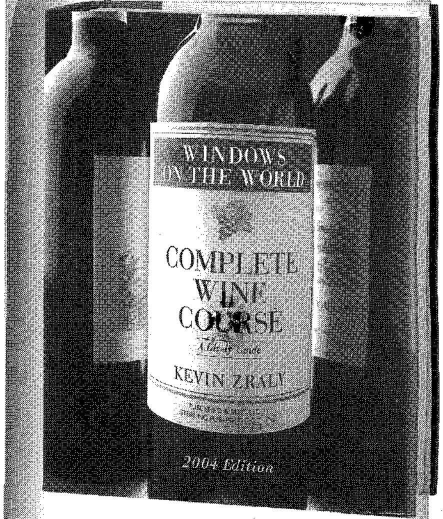

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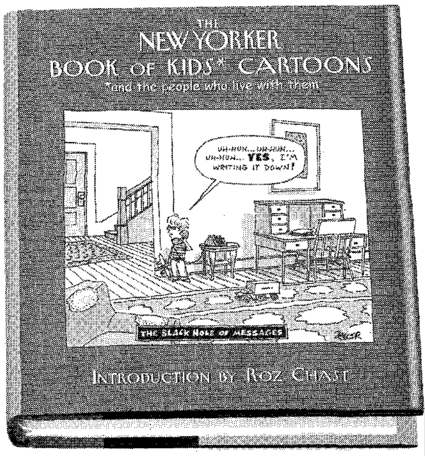
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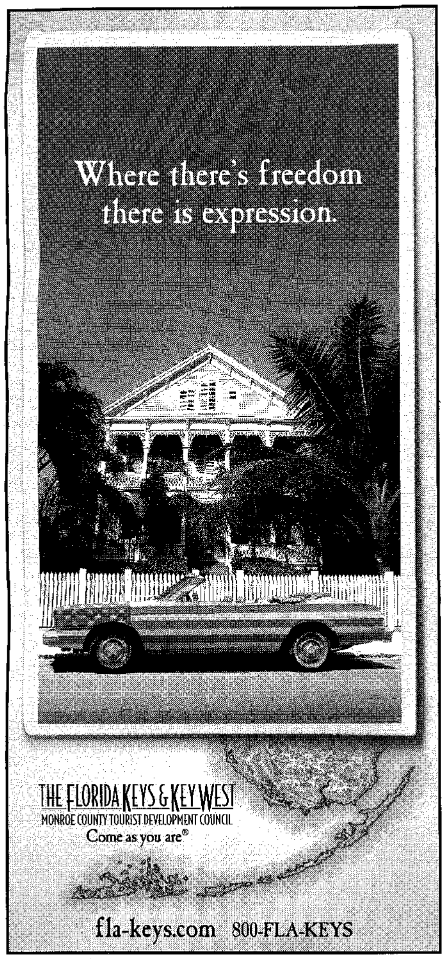
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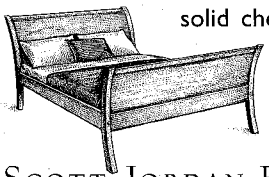
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claims of a Turkish waitress, "Her foreignness was such a welcome sight," and takes satisfaction in learning from an Ethiopian male nurse that among his patients "a majority of the elderly daydream of the Hitler days and still cast blame on the Jews for everything that has transpired." He observes police attacking protesters "with methodical rage." He notes how on the Berlin streets "the young appear laid-back," while a two-hour photographic session in his apartment amounts to "an accurate assessment of my uptightness."

An American visitor to Germany does not have to be Jewish to feel there a frisson, a shudder of fascination at the abyss beneath the carpet. I was raised among the hardworking, pork-loving, sometimes bossy, sometimes jolly Pennsylvania Germans of eastern Pennsylvania and am altogether German on the maternal side of my ethnic heritage; visiting Germany, I expect to feel at home, and do, especially in the tourist's cosseted microcosm of efficient service and excellent English. Yet I am wary, on this terrain where madness ruled and commanded loyalty to the end. The extensive reconstructions in reunified Berlin have an uncanny suggestion of re-stating again, in boastfully huge Kaiseresque terms, an aesthetic that didn't bode well the first time. The tourist, after his visits to Frederick the Great's elegant retreat Sans Souci and the world-class painterly treasures of the Gemäldegalerie, gets out of the bus and stands on a huge vacant lot, the Schlossplatz, where the vast palace of the Hohenzollerns, having undergone extensive war damage in 1944-1945, was razed by Walter Ulbricht's German Democratic Republic in 1950. Now that free enterprise again controls all of Berlin, there is talk of rebuilding the *Schloss*—as the great Lutheran *Dom* nearby has been—though the expense would be titanic. Standing on the dusty Schlossplatz, beside the dilapidating Palast der Republik erected by the Communists, the tourist gazes across the Great Elector's private gardens, the Lustgarten, at a building that looks familiar from old newsreels. It is the low white Altes Museum, the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel's masterpiece of 1830, with its eighteen Ionic columns. From a platform in front of it, Hitler used to speak to his followers, massed on the garden site, which had been cleared of flowers by the Nazis in 1935. For a moment, with a dark thrill, one feels on the rim of that ecstatic rally. Schinkel's superb neoclassic architecture has a certain serene iciness, and, as central Berlin fills in with reconstructions and new structures, one thinks of the megalomaniacal architectural dreams that Albert Speer and his Führer projected for the capital of the Thousand-Year Reich.

Now sixty years have passed, the surviving participants in the Second World War are fewer and fewer, and Germany is populated by people who had nothing to do with the Nazi regime; millions of them are not even ethnically German. At times, Abish, like Fassbinder in some of his films, implies that there is something disgusting and scandalous in Germany's reconstituting itself as a viable capitalist democracy. Some young Germans have felt this also; the Baader-Meinhof Gang, from an angle of leftist indignation, rephrased the insatiable shrill rage of Hitler and Goebbels. Whence this love of extremes, this intemperance? Thomas Mann, in a 1904 short story, "At the Prophet's," says of a young Nietzschean orator, "A fevered and frightfully irritable ego here expanded itself." The German tribes did not succumb to the Roman Empire but remained outside its laws, and, for all the achievements and decorum of contemporary Germans, a potential for lawlessness—for going beyond the merely decent and workable—still hangs in the air. In "How German Is It," Helmuth Hargenau, the model German gone awry, speaks eloquently of the link between the passion for abstract thought that the philosopher Brumhold exemplified and his passion for "the thick forest, his beloved forest, a forest . . . that is and remains spiritually close to us . . . the German forest in which dwells our spirit, our ideals, our cultural past, our poetry, our truth." Earlier in the novel, Abish mentions "the innate German upper- and upper-middle-class instinct to combine what is essentially 'perfection' with the 'menacing.' " In feeling the menace, and reifying it with anecdotes and fiction, he is, in his own voice, giving the news. One must accept this news with the reservation that, as history has shown more than once, blanket distrust of any group is a seedbed for massacre. ♦

### BOOKS

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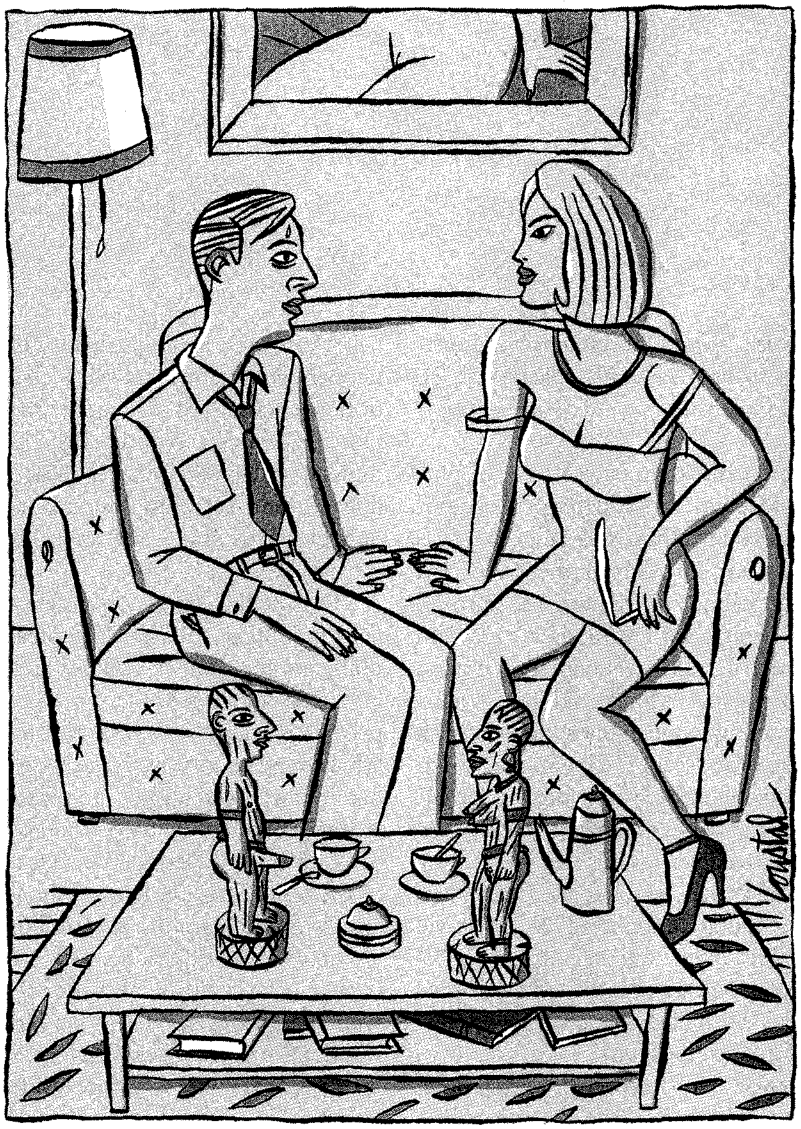
### BY JUDITH THURMAN



When I typed the phrase "self-help/relationships" into the Amazon search engine recently, eighty-four thousand six hundred and forty-three titles surfaced, treating every imaginable facet of the subject (and then some), from reincarnation to cunnilingus. Not long thereafter, I spent a flight from Los Angeles to Newark with a new entry to the lists: Helen Fisher's "Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love" (Henry Holt; $25), a work that mixes dumbed-down evolutionary psychology and neuroscience with advice for "making romance last." At least six female passengers in my vicinity were engrossed in printed matter of a similar gestalt. A frowning matron across the aisle was taking notes in the margins of "Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps." The twins behind me, whom I had mistaken, in the departure lounge, for elderly nuns, had burrowed into Danielle Steel novels. Reading over the tattooed shoulder of my neighbor in the window seat, a blonde in her twenties returning, she confided, from a wild weekend on the beach at Malibu, I could see that she was trying to focus bloodshot eyes on the dating advice—"Male 'turn-ons' that aren't"—in *Glamour*. All around us, meanwhile, members of the opposite sex were intent on video games that taught a different set of relationship skills: those which sustain the polygamous marriage—happy since time immemorial—of a man and his guns.

Dr. Fisher, who boasts, in a footnote, of having coined the term "sexual intelligence," is a research anthropologist at Rutgers University who was formerly connected with the American Museum of Natural History. Her credentials command attention, and so does the title of her book—partly, I think, because it scans so smartly, its triad of monosyllables mimicking the assurance of a firm knock on the door, and one feels obliged to open it up. Such imprudence can be fatal, and in this case it is. One isn't uninterested to learn that chimps French-kiss; that seminal fluid "alleviates depressive symptoms" in the human female; and that there is apparently a gene for monogamy (though I hear he lives in Cleveland). It is also mildly comforting to be reassured that one's myopia, neediness, stupidity, naïveté, short legs, crossed stars, high expectations, low self-esteem, only childhood, and weakness of character were not, over the years, solely responsible for various romantic debacles—they were precipitated by the surging or ebbing of the dopamine ("and/or norepinephrine") in one's inferior tegmentum, give or take a little serotonin, testosterone, and Sara Lee. But Fisher's erudition has been so watered down by condescension to a reader who, she imagines, is enlightened to discover that "sex is good for you, if . . . you enjoy this form of exercise and self-expression" that her science is as cartoonish as her advice is insipid and her prose tasteless. If you really want to know why we love—without any false promises that the knowledge will improve your muscle tone or your chances for lasting bliss—skip the lame experiments with a "Love-o-meter" and speculations on the courtship habits of *Homo habilis* (was

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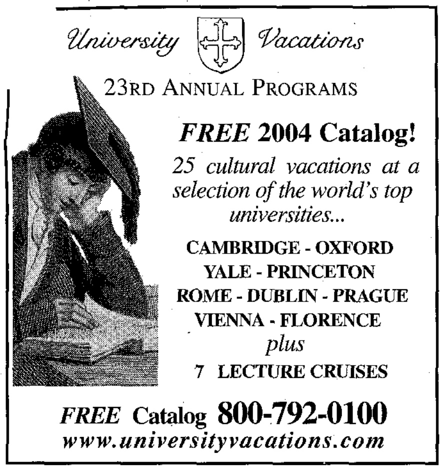

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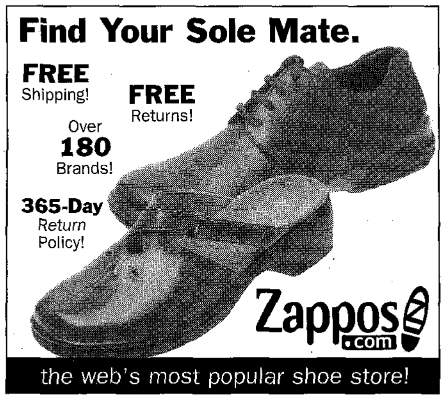

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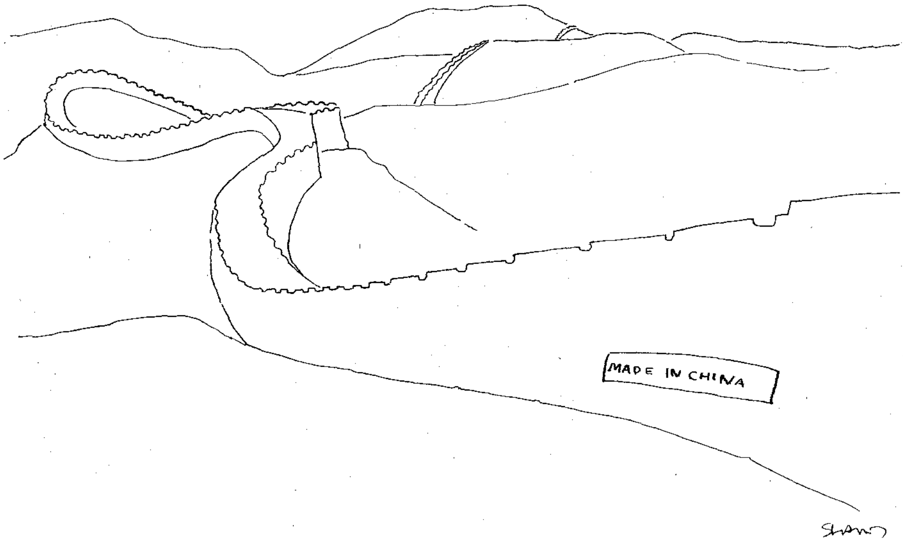

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he really, "two million years ago," humming "sexy tunes" to his "special girls"?). Read Colette.

Simon Blackburn, a professor of philosophy at Cambridge and the author of books on ethics and language, was invited not long ago by the New York Public Library to deliver a lecture on lust—though hardly to address a problem common to students of both sexes in a less secure era, that of furtive old goats in raincoats trying to pinch one's knees under a table in the Reading Room. Blackburn was one of the guest eminences participating in a series of "meditations" on the Seven Deadly Sins. His talk grew into a novella-length essay, "Lust" (New York Public Library/Oxford; $17.95), that will probably not be sold in quantity at airport newsstands, although the publisher proposes it as an "amusing and provocative" gift for Valentine's Day.

Anyone who has been hoping for a little something from the Pleasure Chest will be disappointed. Blackburn is concerned not with lust in practice but with the ideas and arguments about the nature of the beast that have been debated, across the millennia, by poets and wags; by feminist academics and Christian theologians; by evolutionary psychologists (of whose genetic determinism Blackburn is not a fan); and, above all, by the frock-coat, chasuble, and toga crowd, to whom, for better or for worse, we owe the Western canon. Suppressed dopamine, elevated serotonin, rampant testosterone, and the ills that they engender do not have much place in his discussion, though rampant sanctimony and "the long chain of human crimes" that it has perpetrated (among them he mentions the "some hundred million dollars of American tax dollars" spent "on promoting abstinence-only programs of sex education") play a central role.

"Fear of lust quickly translates into fearful politics," Blackburn writes. His unlikely champion of guiltless pleasure is Thomas Hobbes, who, one is surprised to learn, was something of a sybarite and an idealist in the bedchamber—a lover who aspired "to please and to be pleased," and who considered lust not only "a sensual appetite" but a "joy of the mind." (Lucky Mrs. Hobbes was apparently not among the millions of women whose experience of conjugal duty is nasty, brutish, and short.) One wonders, however, what odds Hobbes would have given Blackburn for achieving his stated aim: to "restore lust to humanity"; "to clean off some of the mud, to rescue it from the echoing denunciations of old men of the deserts, to deliver it from the pallid and envious confessors of Rome and the disgust of the Renaissance, to destroy the stocks and pillories of the Puritans, to separate it from other things that we know drag it down . . . and so to lift it from the category of sin to that of virtue."

A touch of rhetorical grandiosity notwithstanding, Blackburn has accomplished a deft, Lilliputian trussing-up of a sprawling, Brobdingnagian body of thought, and I will not attempt to

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give an overview of what is already an overview: written with lucidity by a man of reason both by profession and by temperament. But if his culture is vast it is also exclusive in the literal sense. There are some striking omissions of sources—hot, high-brow stuff that one would have thought both essential and obvious, particularly to a surveyor working at an altitude from which, surely, he might have noticed other continents. Blackburn not only overlooks the Vedas and "A Thousand and One Nights" but takes a pass on post-classical southern Europe (except for Dante and Bernini); the great bawds of the sixteenth century (Aretino and Rabelais); the indispensable modern Philips, Larkin and Roth; and the Japanese, who know a thing or two (perhaps more, even, than St. Augustine or Dr. Martha Nussbaum) about the senses. Most strangely, though maybe not, Blackburn invites, *par politesse*, a small, well-behaved French contingent—Rousseau, Proust, Sartre—but neglects Sade.

Sade is the phantom lecher of the Reading Room: he is filthy and terrible and the real thing. There is no "overcoming pessimism" about sexual desire (the pessimism of "supposing that sex is essentially tied to degradation") with the Marquis. Here is Shakespeare's lust-in-action antihero: savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust—and he writes on purpose to make the reader mad. Sade the philosopher (not the odious, whiny sex offender) embodies the reasons, or the principle of unreason, that make it not only quixotic but sentimental to undertake the redemption of lust as a virtue—as what Blackburn calls "a pure mutuality of pleasure," and Fisher, for her sins, "a form of exercise and self-expression." Lust, Blackburn acknowledges at the outset of his essay, "subverts propriety." Well, yes, it does. "Living with lust is like living shackled to a lunatic." (So he knows, too.) And that bellowing, drooling, chthonic lunatic will always resist being rescued from the mire by well-meaning hands, showered off, and rehabilitated as a mature recreation. ♦

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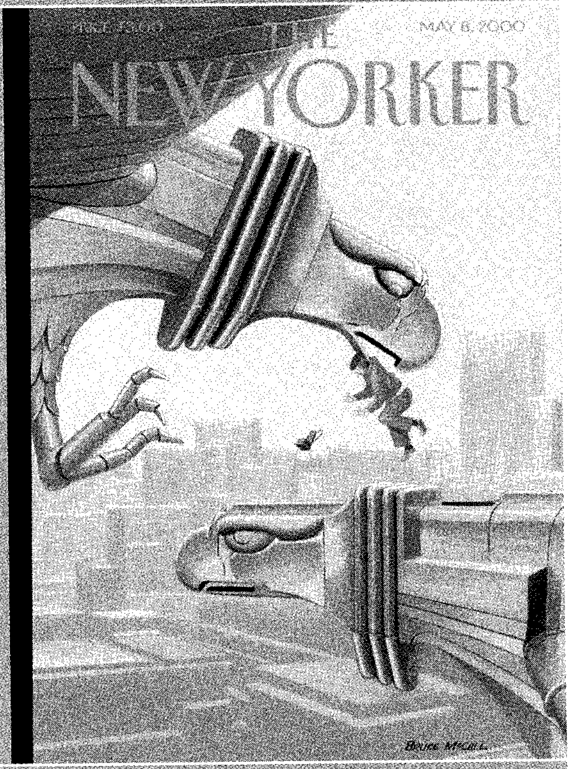

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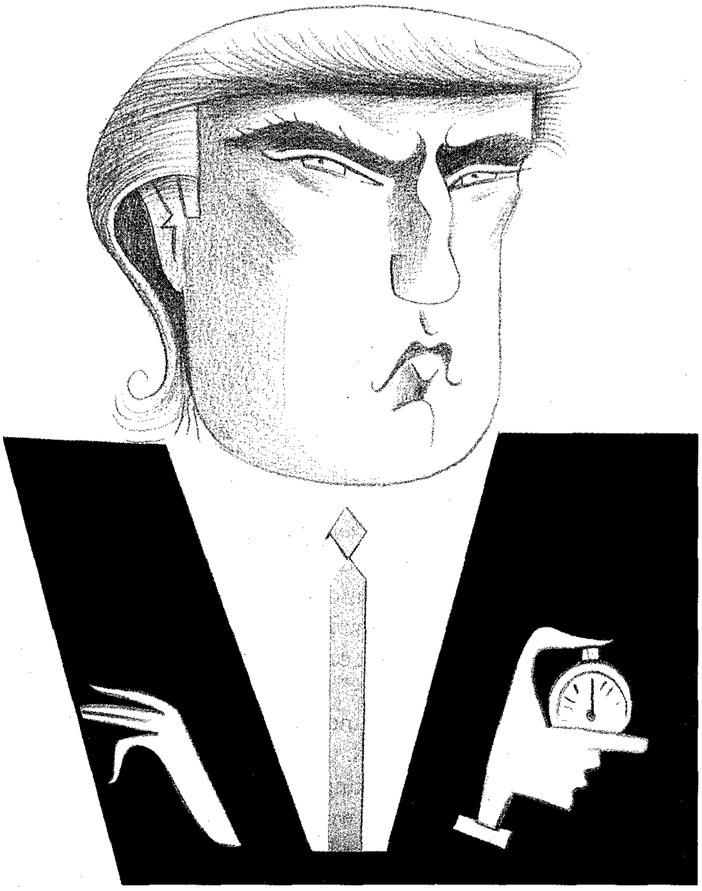
# AMERICAN IDOL

*For the young hopefuls on "The Apprentice," Trump towers.*

### BY NANCY FRANKLIN



*Taskmaster Donald Trump puts his protégés through their paces.*

ROBERT RISKO

"The Apprentice," the NBC reality show starring Donald Trump as God, is the greatest show in the country, and maybe in the entire world, and, as I sit watching it in my spectacular apartment, just steps from legendary Amsterdam Avenue, the most desirable address in Manhattan, I feel that I am living out the American dream, and that writing about the show is the job of a lifetime, and will, if I work at it hard enough, make me a billionaire someday.

Well, maybe not. But this is the line of goods that Trump sells, and it seems that the sixteen contestants on the show, who are vying to win a job as the president of one of his companies, can't buy enough of it. The format of "The Apprentice" parallels that of CBS's "Survivor," and it's no accident: both shows were created by the reality-TV mastermind Mark Burnett, though in this case Burnett shares executive-producer billing with Trump, who, according to the closing credits, is solely responsible for the weekly decision as to who stays and who goes—who ends up, as he puts it, in "the suite or the street." Financially, the stakes on "The Apprentice" are lower than they are on "Survivor": the final contestants on that show win a million dollars and then get to go home (though most of them seem to want to go to Hollywood instead); in "The Apprentice," the last person standing gets a yearly salary of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and his or her troubles have only just begun. A new über-"Survivor" started two weeks ago, featuring eighteen of the most vivid personalities from the show's seven previous installments, and the first episodes of the two series even had similar openings, with "Survivor"'s host, Jeff Probst (who, perhaps beaten down by too much reality, has aged noticeably since we first saw him, in the summer of 2000), and Trump talking to us from helicopters that then swoop dramatically down and away, along with our stomachs.

But "The Apprentice" doesn't have the "Lord of the Flies" quality of "Survivor," where the contestants' alliances and betrayals provide the drama, and where luck, physical stamina, and the strategic ability of a chess player are required to win. Instead, Trump has two of his deputies out in the field watching the contestants as they perform whatever task he has set out for them, and he is given a fairly accurate sense of who's been naughty or nice, who's been competent or bungling, who's hung back or stepped up to the plate. The drama of "The Apprentice" takes place in the boardroom (a fake boardroom in Trump Tower, built just for the show), and culminates with two awful little words from Trump: "You're fired." I must confess that I enjoy his delivery of this line—enjoy it big-league, as he might say—though I'm pretty sure I shouldn't. There is something thrilling about being so close to danger yet untouched by it, as if a speeding bullet had come *this* close but missed. At the same time, his decisiveness is oddly lulling; you can just sit there while the worker ants carry the load and then let Trump take responsibility for who gets to live another day and who gets stepped on.

Between firings, the show paints a distorted picture of New York, and a very limited portrait of Trump himself. In the New York City of "The Apprentice"—which, in the first four episodes, at least, consists only of Manhattan—it's always fair weather: the sky is always blue, the moon is always full, and who knows what the streets are paved with—we rarely see them. And there's no sense that Trump has ever really got his own hands dirty with work or with rough dealing, or even with the pleasure of building things. (In the A & E "Biography" of Trump, we learn that as a boy he loved going to construction sites with his father, who was also a successful developer.) The fantasy that Trump promotes, with endless hyperbole, is actually a conventional one: he says that the winner will have "the dream job of a lifetime"; Trump Tower is "one of the greatest buildings in the world"; his apartment is "the nicest apartment in New York," which he shows to "very few people—Presidents, kings"; and his golf course is "the best golf course in

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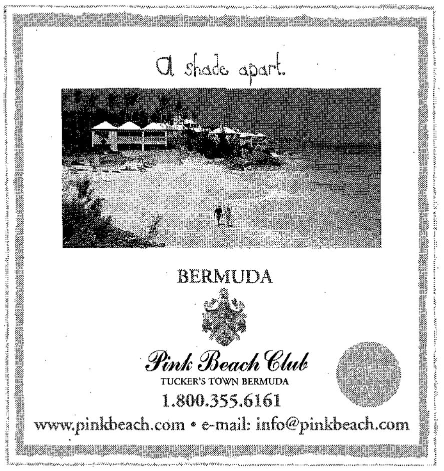

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New York State." Trump has been in our faces for more than twenty years now, so we shouldn't be surprised by his self-aggrandizement—but occasionally it reaches a truly stupefying level: in one episode, the camera cuts from the Statue of Liberty to a stretch limo in motion. O.K., we can live with that, and simply roll our eyes. But in a later episode an image of the statue segues into a shot of Trump Tower. Does Burnett mean this as a joke, a dig at his co-executive producer's grandiosity? Of course, Trump Tower does symbolize liberty, in a sense: when Trump demolished the Bonwit Teller building to create his monument to himself, he promised to preserve Bonwit's Art Deco friezes; but in the end he took the liberty of destroying them.

Although Trump is the most interesting person on "The Apprentice," it is instructive to watch the two teams—which were initially divided by sex—go about their assignments, so that if you happen to find yourself on a reality show you'll know how not to behave. The men are mostly a mixed bag of chest beaters and bad listeners, and the women seem to be trying out for the Laker Girls. They go around the city in skimpy clothing and vertiginously high heels; they dance for a salesman in an attempt to persuade him to lower the price of a gold bar; they kiss men who buy lemonade from them. By the end of the fourth episode, it had become impossible to take any of the women seriously, even though they had won all four competitions, because they had won them almost exclusively by shaking their booty. Trump finally told them that they were coming "a little close to crossing the line," but before this he had allowed the cameras to capture the girls getting dressed.

Generally speaking, the contestants don't see anything wrong with Trump. One of the men—a loose cannon who was doomed from the start but managed to hang in until the third episode (and seemed about to lunge at Trump when he was fired)—couldn't contain his excitement when "the master" shook his hand, as if Trump were the Pope or a Beatle. When the women were rewarded for a win by being flown to Boston for dinner and back, one of them, a restaurant owner, said to the camera, "When I got off the jet, I thought, I'd better start thinking, This is my jet. You have to want those things and aspire to those things if you want to be like Trump."

Yeah, you do, I guess. If you want to be like Trump, a good place to start is by thinking more about what you want and less about what other people might want. Take, for example, Trump's mammoth development on the West Side of Manhattan, which will eventually have eighteen buildings, nearly six thousand apartments, and some three thousand parking spaces. It is, so far, an aesthetic disaster, with some of the ugliest buildings the city has seen in a long time; and one of the buildings now going up will, by design, cause the closing of a crucial nearby highway exit. It must be said, however, that the area lay derelict for some years before Trump came along, and it could be argued—futilely, at this point—that his original wish to put up the world's tallest building on the site should have been granted; such a building at least stood a chance of being uplifting and grand. If you're going to ruin a view, at least ruin it beautifully. Trump owns an estate in Palm Beach called Mar-a-Lago; perhaps his new development on the Hudson River—named, inevitably, Trump Place—should have been called Mar a City.

Although Trump is, to many people, the personification of New York, "The Apprentice" seems located nowhere except in the participants' egos. You never hear any of them express the least bit of curiosity about anyone or anything around them. No one *wonders* about anything. No one ever asks a question—except Donald Trump, who, one has to admit, breathes life into the show. (The apotheosis of this trend may have been "The Simple-Minded Life," starring the proudly thoughtless Nicole Richie and the vacant, dashboard-puppy-necked Paris Hilton.) Several other recent reality shows also seem to take place in a vacuum, in mansions that lack any hint of human habitation. Trump's gilt trip of an apartment appears to be unlived in; when the contestants were shown the dining room, one of them asked Trump when he last ate dinner there. "Uh . . . a long time ago," he said. The New York he is showing his protégés is a city of jets, helicopters, limos, and polished marble. They're being treated to what they think is the best of everything—given a prettily wrapped gift that, when opened, turns out to have nothing in it. ♦

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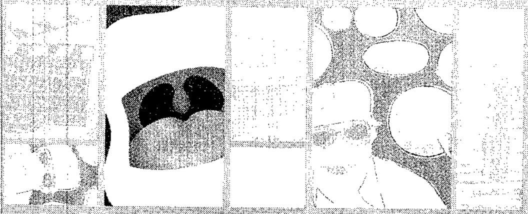

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## THE ART WORLD

# UNTOUCHABLE

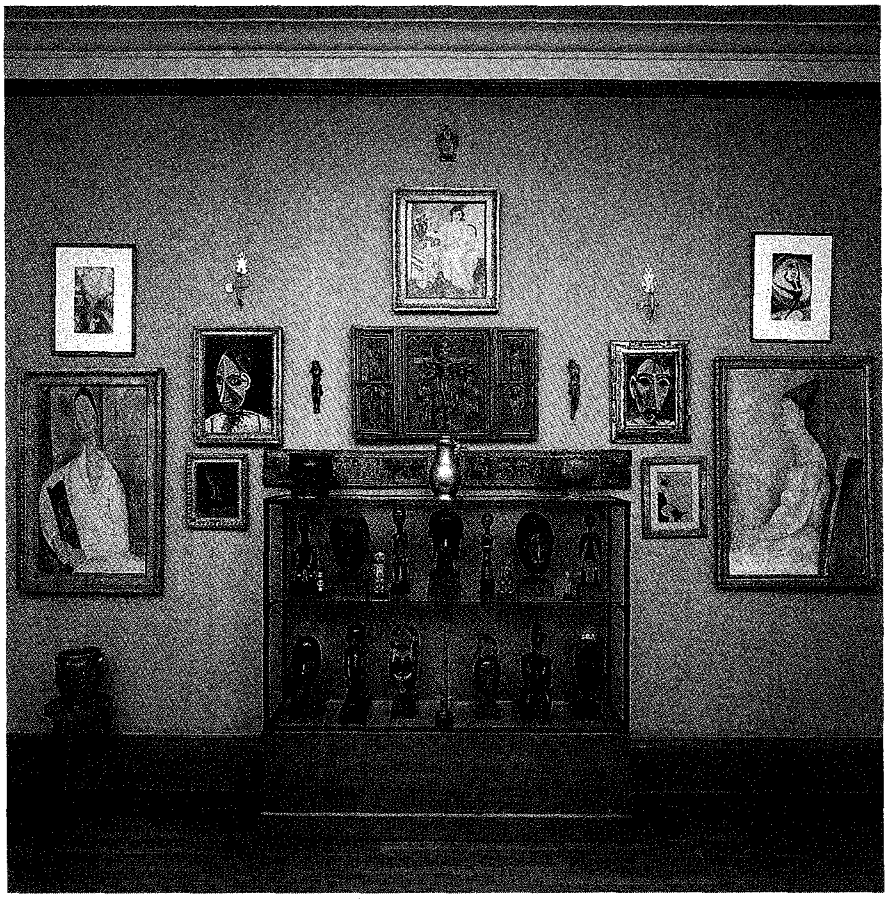
*The Barnes Foundation and its fate.*

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Last month, I visited the Barnes Foundation for the first time. This is an embarrassing admission for a veteran art critic, but it relieves my sour conscience at having sometimes let people assume that, of course, I knew the Barnes—I just had remarkably little to say about it. The place's awkward location out on Philadelphia's Main Line, in Lower Merion Township; its admission-by-application-only policy; and, not least, its crabby, cultish aura, generated by the strange Dr. Albert Barnes and maintained since his death, in 1951—these factors enfeebled my resolution to go there. Now they give me compassionate pause in what I feel obliged to say apropos of current proposals that aim to resolve the foundation's chronic financial and administrative woes by moving the collection to a new home downtown: Altering so much as a molecule of one of the greatest art installations I have ever seen would be an aesthetic crime. It would also give hosts of my fellow art lovers access to treasures that they might otherwise never see. And it's not as if aesthetic crimes don't happen all the time. Life goes on. But something extraordinary would be lost in the event.

Thousands of wonderful objects fill a graceful château that was finished in 1925. Among them, hundreds of School of Paris modern paintings and a smattering of Old Masters and American moderns are massed on walls covered in warm tan burlap, labelled only with the artists' names. The pictures are interspersed with items of skilled metalwork (hinges, lock plates, utensils). Antique furniture, African sculpture, Pennsylvania folk art, Egyptian and Greek antiquities, and Southwest Indian rugs and ceramics and jewelry cluster throughout. There are enough andirons to outfit an andiron museum. The over-all level of connoisseurship is sublime, though riddled with idiosyncrasies, such as a gluttonous avidity for Renoirs—a hundred and eighty-one, many of them small, perfunctory daubs. If Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro suggests brown soup, Renoiresque chroma is orange juice. Its fruity effulgence suffuses the Barnes.

Barnes was a poor boy who became a patent-medicine millionaire. He was introduced to art by a school friend, the Ashcan realist painter William Glackens. Barnes's taste was sensual, with a special tilt toward randy nudes. (There's a startling one by van Gogh, of a swarthy prostitute nestled in what looks like an explosion of swan feathers.) He thought well of himself and ill of others, notably those in Philadelphia high society whose ideas—or aversion to ideas—opposed his own. He took a paternalistic interest in "plain people," as he called them. He left control of the foundation's board to Lincoln University, a local, historically African-American institution, and the collection's fate now rests with a county judge, who will decide on the board's petition to facilitate a move. Legal approval would release a flood of money: a hundred and fifty million dollars toward costs and an endowment for the Barnes, to be raised by the Lenfest and Annenberg foundations and the Pew Charitable Trusts. It would also break Barnes's original stipulation, which forbids moving any of the foundation's pieces and asserts that the foundation is not a museum but a school, dedicated to furthering his philosophy of art appreciation. That philosophy, derived from pragmatism, emphasizes close study of artists' decisions and their intellectual and emotional import, in line with the book "Art as Experience," by Barnes's friend and supporter John Dewey. Barnes's own prose, in books on Renoir, Cézanne, and Matisse, is, like Dewey's, clearly written, firmly reasoned, and numbingly dull.



*African and European carvings with Picassos, Modiglianis, Demuths, and a Matisse.*

COURTESY THE BARNES FOUNDATION

The weirdness and the glory of the

Barnes come down to the same thing: a relentlessly pedagogical intention behind the placement of everything. The lessons are rarely obvious. Most have to do with contrasts and comparisons of composition, line, color, texture, and other formal qualities. Some seem trivial (the rhyming of a teapot spout with the angle of a piece of driftwood in a Gauguin), if not crudely jokey (two unusually wide wooden chairs beneath two massive Renoir nudes). The particulars of Barnes's thinking count for far less, in any case, than their subliminal effect: a pressure of fierce attentiveness, which gives mysterious order to arrangements that appear chaotic at first glance. Paintings complement or provoke one another. Inferior works defer to superior ones, which respond with noblesse oblige. Each work contributes according to its means and is indulged according to its needs. At times, one feels presented with an overwhelming theorem. I think of the lineup on one wall of a Redon, a Veronese, a van Gogh, a Tintoretto, a Rousseau, a Courbet, another Tintoretto, a Soutine, and a Renoir. Scanning this array as if it were a rune, I felt momentarily possessed of a secret that might save the world, on the impossible condition that I could understand it.

The Barnes is immersive. An aesthetic rapture descends when you walk through the front door and reigns uninterrupted until you leave. This is exhausting, of course, but far less so than the tenor of a normal museum, which groups works by adventitious categories of period and style. Continually stopping and re-starting our contemplation in museums, from work to work and department to department, we wear out pretty swiftly. Not so at the Barnes, where the pre-considered, pre-loved character of the exhibits—a sort of spiritual cruise control—enables steady enjoyment. If the installation has a weakness, it is, ironically, in regard to education. The plodding but conceptually structured organization of regular museum collections serves learning. Using the Barnes for introductory teaching is like starting a basic arithmetic course with calculus; it's more apt to daunt naïve minds than to develop them.

Matisse's "Le Bonheur de Vivre" (1906), the single most consequential modern painting before "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" (which is often considered to be Picasso's competitive response to it), hangs in a staircase landing, as if it were nothing much. In truth, it's a thunderclap of audacities, each shattering some conventional expectation. If you haven't seen it in person, you have no idea. (Until last month, I had no idea.) You may arrive on the second floor a somewhat different person than you were on the first. At that point, you confront from a balcony another Matisse—the great mural "La Danse" (1932-33), which Barnes commissioned—and understand the odd liveliness of its schematic, cavorting nudes as you saw them from the floor of the great hall below. Matisse painted shadows that pop the figures forward from their abstractly patterned ground. Turning to your left, on the balcony, you behold African tribal sculptures and Navajo blankets that seem to absorb the mural's iconographic and formal energies and to bounce them back, enhanced.

Such epiphanies occur around many a corner of the Barnes. (A few sad rooms suggest a jumbled open storage of things that didn't fit elsewhere, but they afford a pleasure of their own, inviting treasure hunts.) The most striking leitmotif of the collection is its numerous juxtapositions of Cézanne and Renoir: the chiselled bone and melting flesh of modern painting. I hardly share Barnes's lust for Renoir, but I will now never forget that artist's exacerbating effect on Cézanne, whose cobbled form and pensive color tense against Renoir's work as if leaning into a hot, fragrant wind. The Barnes similarly dramatizes the distinctive qualities of all its artists, relative to one another. I came away with a new thought about almost every one.

The Barnes is a work of art in itself, more than the sum of its fabulous parts. The same may be said for other institutionalized private collections—New York's Frick, Boston's Gardner—but without equal justice. None so engages visitors in an adventure of sensibility. As you test the virtues of the collection, they test you, probing the depths and exposing the limits of your perceptive powers. You don't view the installation so much as live it, undergoing an experience that will persist in your memory like a love affair that taught you some thrilling, and some dismaying, things about your character. If there were other places like the Barnes, dispensing with it would not be tragic. But one minus one is zero. ♦

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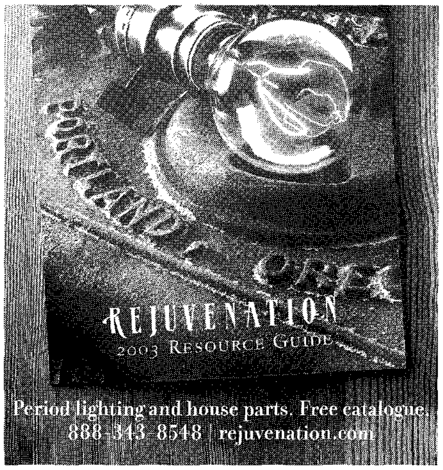

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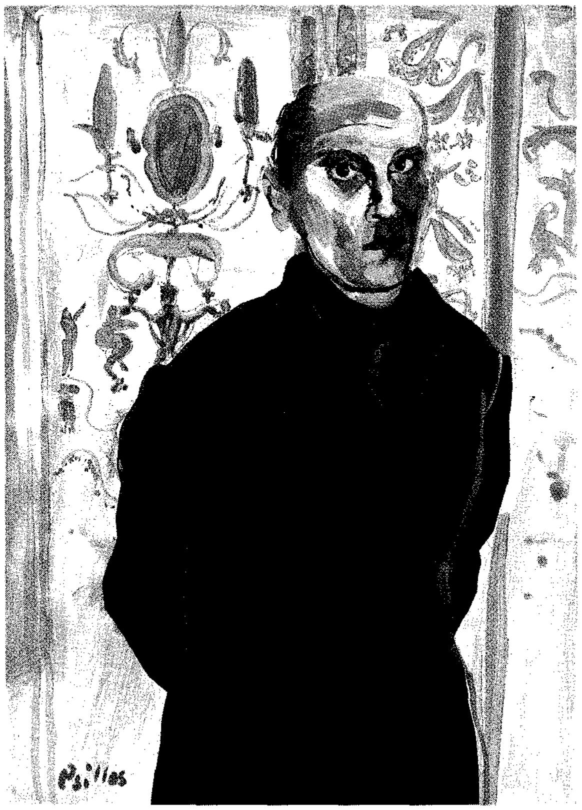
### *John Malkovich as Tom Ripley.*

### BY ANTHONY LANE

Is there any place, in the world of Patricia Highsmith, for the non-weird? Not only do crooked souls seem more at ease there than the straight; after a while, the air grows so corrupting that the straight start behaving like the crooked. Highsmith's first novel, "Strangers on a Train," was given the full treatment by Alfred Hitchcock in 1951, and nobody who has seen it can forget the frictionless perversion of Robert Walker in the role of Bruno—the charming fellow-passenger who suggests murder as if he were offering a light. But Farley Granger, too, as the tennis star to whom the offer is made, becomes no less disquieting. He begins as a handsome patsy, but somehow Bruno's guile sucks him in. For Highsmith, life is all backhand and sly drop shot, with a vicious spin on the ball, and the actors who have been drawn to her are not exactly the kind in whom you place your trust; think of Alain Delon in "Plein Soleil," or Dennis Hopper in "The American Friend." As for Jude Law in "The Talented Mr. Ripley," he may have been a victim, but, with that ice-white smile and body of bronze, he was a victim who looked like a killer.



*Malkovich in Liliana Cavani's "Ripley's Game."*

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

It's a hell of a team, but wait: the captain has arrived. "Ripley's Game," directed by Liliana Cavani, sees the welcome return of Tom Ripley. On his previous visit to our screen, he was played by Matt Damon, but that milky substitute can now be put behind us. Ladies and gentlemen, the award for Best Ripley—the deathless bringer of death, a man with a mine shaft where his moral sense should be, and a hero so beloved of Highsmith that she gave him five books to himself—goes to Mr. John Malkovich. The moment that he appears onscreen, you think, Of course: *that* is Ripley. Highsmith groupies might find him too old, but I see Ripley as being of any age—no less devilish at eighty than he was at twenty-one, and as comfortable in the eighteenth century, perhaps, as he is in the twenty-first. I have no family tree to hand, but, were Malkovich's Ripley proved to be a direct descendant of his Vicomte de Valmont, in "Dangerous Liaisons," I would not be remotely surprised. The blood of both characters is rich in the patient scorn of the cultivated; consider our first sight of Malkovich, in Cavani's film, as he stands perfectly still in a Berlin square and gives the impression, as he has done throughout his movie career, of posing for an invisible sculptor.

Ripley is in Germany to sell some Old Master drawings. He is not a dealer but a persuasive go-between, and his outfit—long dark coat and beret—is the uniform of a modern centaur, with the body of an entrepreneur and the head of an artist. The sale does not go well, and Ripley interrupts his courteous discussion of Guercino to pick up a poker from the fireplace and beat a man to death. This is the only shocking, as opposed to gruelling or mock-glamorous, act of violence that I have witnessed onscreen in the past year, because it flashes out of nowhere, like lightning across a clear sky. Ripley has the same frustrations as you and I, but deals with them quite differently, and in so doing rebukes our inhibitions. Where you or I would say, "God, I could have killed him," because some guy cut in and took our parking space, Ripley really would kill him, and call it a job well done. But that is not the strangest thing about him. The oddity of Ripley is that he likes to see others do harm as well. He leads them into temptation and, in a parody of human companionship, lends them a helping hand. Although he would never admit as much, he is bored and even lonely, and that is why "Ripley's Game," which could have been a freak show, seems more like a portrait of evil making friends.

The friends—he doesn't like them, but they become part of his existence—are Reeves (Ray Winstone) and Jonathan (Dougray Scott). Reeves is a Cockney brute, based in Berlin, with a pair of shades, a leather coat, and fingers in many unappealing pies. Jonathan, another Englishman, is a dour young picture-framer who lives, like Ripley, in Italy. They are near-neighbors, in the Veneto, and Ripley is invited to a party at Jonathan's house. Our hero seems, believe it or not, on the brink of enjoying himself; after being introduced to Jonathan's beautiful wife (Lena Headey), he accepts a glass of wine and lingers on the threshold of the kitchen. From there, he overhears Jonathan declare to the assembled company, "That's the trouble with Ripley. Too much money and no taste." The insult is incalculable. From here on, the die is cast, and Jonathan will be rolled into Ripley's game.

The game is that Reeves wishes to

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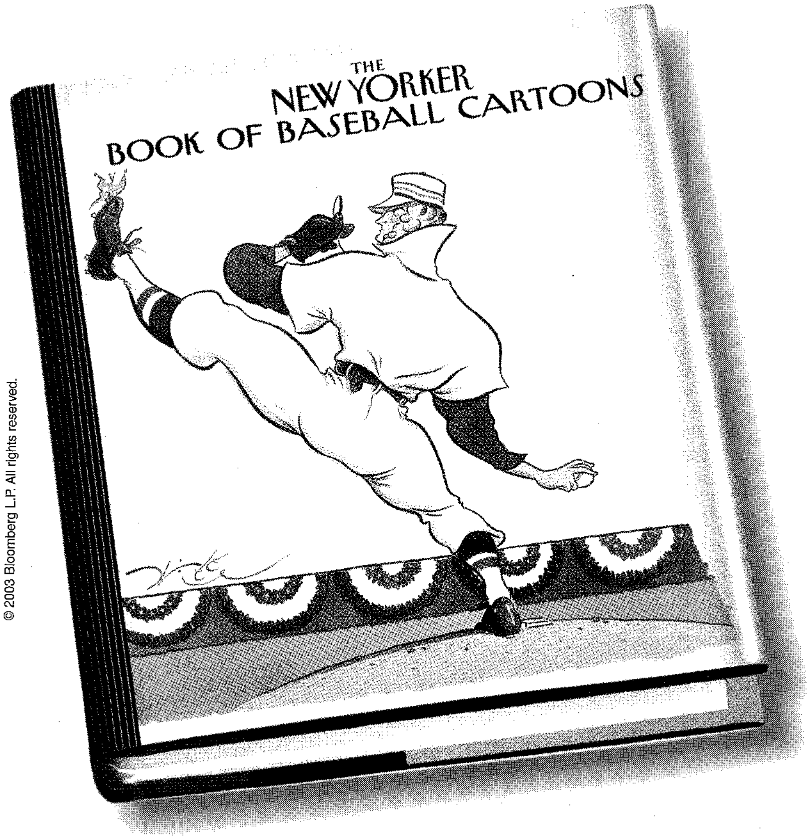
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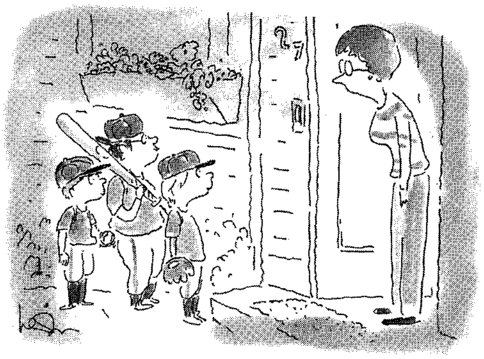

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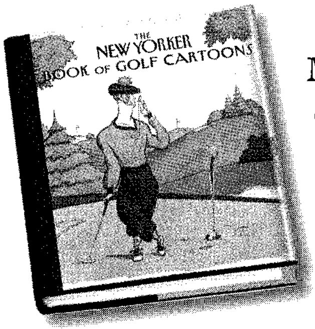
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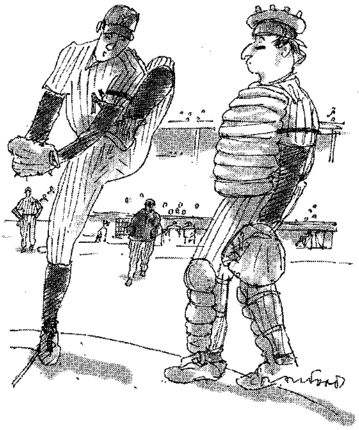

*"Gimme a hand—I'm stuck."*

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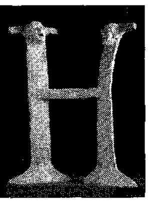

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eliminate a couple of business rivals. He travels to Italy and asks his old pal Ripley to recommend an assassin—a novice, preferably, without a record. Ripley suggests Jonathan, who is sick with leukemia and does not expect to survive. He will earn fifty thousand dollars, doubled on the quiet by Ripley himself. (As he says, "Innocence is expensive.") A day or two of minor inconvenience in Berlin and Jonathan will be able to furnish a future for his wife and son. Many viewers will feel queasy at this prospect, because Liliana Cavani, following Highsmith, is nudging them toward a crux that they would rather not confront: does a man become more, or less, cavalier with other lives as the end of his own approaches? A Jonathan in full health would have spurned the offer as absurd, but a dwindling Jonathan can be forgiven for thinking that he has nothing much to lose.

Dougray Scott certainly looks the part. He is drained and sallow, like a vampire who's just realized that there are no virgins coming for the weekend. In fact, his performance is thoroughly stressed and uncomfortable, as if he were genuinely freaked by Malkovich's presence, and Cavani has never been the kind of director who spares the feelings of her actors—or, for that matter, of her audience. Her heyday was the nineteen-seventies, when she made "The Night Porter," and to watch "Ripley's Game" is to be transported back to the visual manners of that era: the glassy lighting, the faces denied all flattery by the camera, and scenes so deliberately locked and stilted that you wonder whether Cavani, like Fassbinder before her, is deriding a movie's obligation to show us a good time. There is one surreally nasty shot, of egg yolk dropped onto a turquoise sofa, which put me off my popcorn for the rest of the afternoon.

Yet, in the end, I did have a good time at "Ripley's Game." The movie may, late in Cavani's career, come to be seen as her best work. The reason is one of simple contrast: the film is stiff and hard, while Malkovich is supple and serpentine, winding himself around that awkwardness like ivy around a column. At one point, Ripley, not wanting to miss any fun, shows up in Germany and assists the fumbling Jonathan in a little train-based homicide. Fans of Wim

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Wenders's "American Friend"—an adaptation of the same Highsmith novel, and another central exhibit in seventies cinema—will remember the train sequence as a desperate and panting affair, with Dennis Hopper's Ripley in full manic spate. This new version is no less fraught, but look how delicately Malkovich, unlike Hopper, inks the moment with black humor. Ripley pauses between slayings and says to Jonathan, "Keep my watch, 'cause if it breaks, I'll kill everyone on this train." To hear Malkovich pronounce the words "The noose, please . . . *thank* you!" as if he were not the onboard murderer but the conductor asking for tickets, is to be reminded, once again, that the creepiest player of our times has a voice as light and high as Fred Astaire's.

There is one last joke, however, that even Ripley might find difficult to stomach. You cannot see this film. Or, rather, you can see it, but you'll have to make plans. "Ripley's Game" has never been given a theatrical distribution in this country. It showed in Europe to strong reviews, and it sneaked onto videotape here last year, a privilege traditionally granted to pornography. Now Cavani's picture has arrived in New York, as part of a fine season—"seventeen of the Best Unsung New Films from Around the World"—organized by *Film Comment* magazine. It will show on February 15th, 19th, and 20th at the Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center; other screenings include work by Lars von Trier and Jacques Rivette. There is even a new Emmanuelle Béart picture, "Strayed," and I must say that a world in which the market demand for Emmanuelle Béart has dried up is not a world in which I wish to live.

And what of Tom Ripley? Throughout Cavani's movie, we have seen him leading the life—or playing the part—of the gentleman connoisseur. Other actors might have nurtured the fanatic in Ripley, but none, I suspect, would have dared to flirt with the fey; in the course of this film, however, we find Malkovich bicycling, practicing yoga, and, yes, sewing in bed. Even after torching a corpse-filled Mercedes, he takes time out to call his florist. Ever the outsider, not to mention the élitist, he would probably relish the fact that his latest appearance on film, like the white truffle, has proved so damnably elusive; it pays appropriate homage to his sense of rarity. Our last sight of him, in "Ripley's Game," finds him leaning against a column at the back of an amphitheatre, listening to a harpsichord recital. Whether he returns to his Palladian villa in the Veneto, or whether, once the music is over, he will revive an old habit and go on the run, is left for us to decide. So keep an eye out for him at the Walter Reade—a skull-faced ghost in a good suit, smiling at the opening credits, then quietly slipping away. ♦

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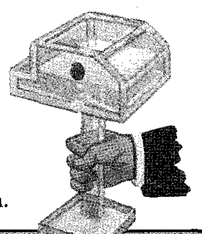

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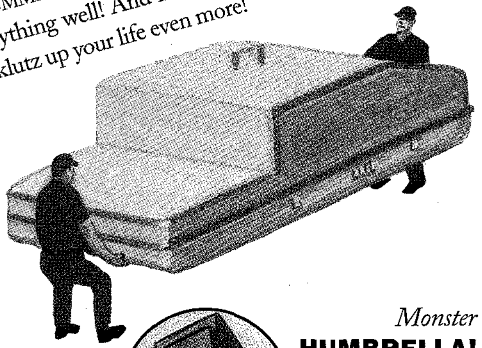

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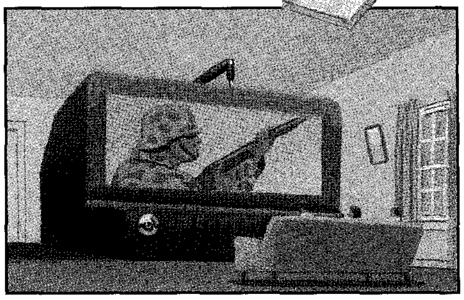

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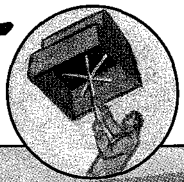

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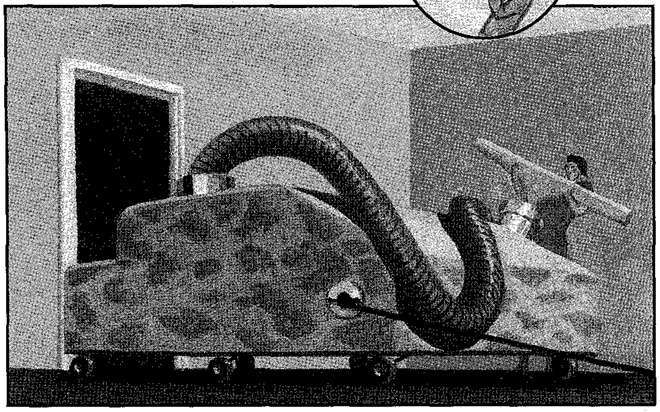

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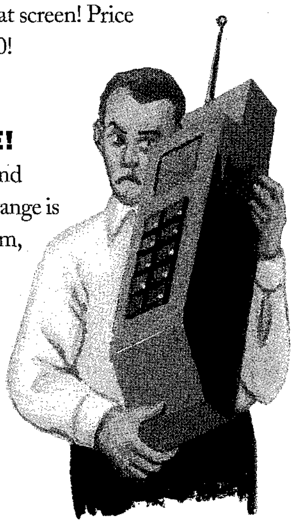

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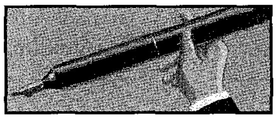

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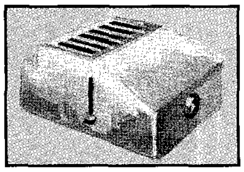

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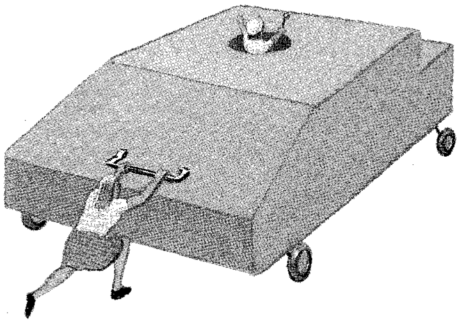

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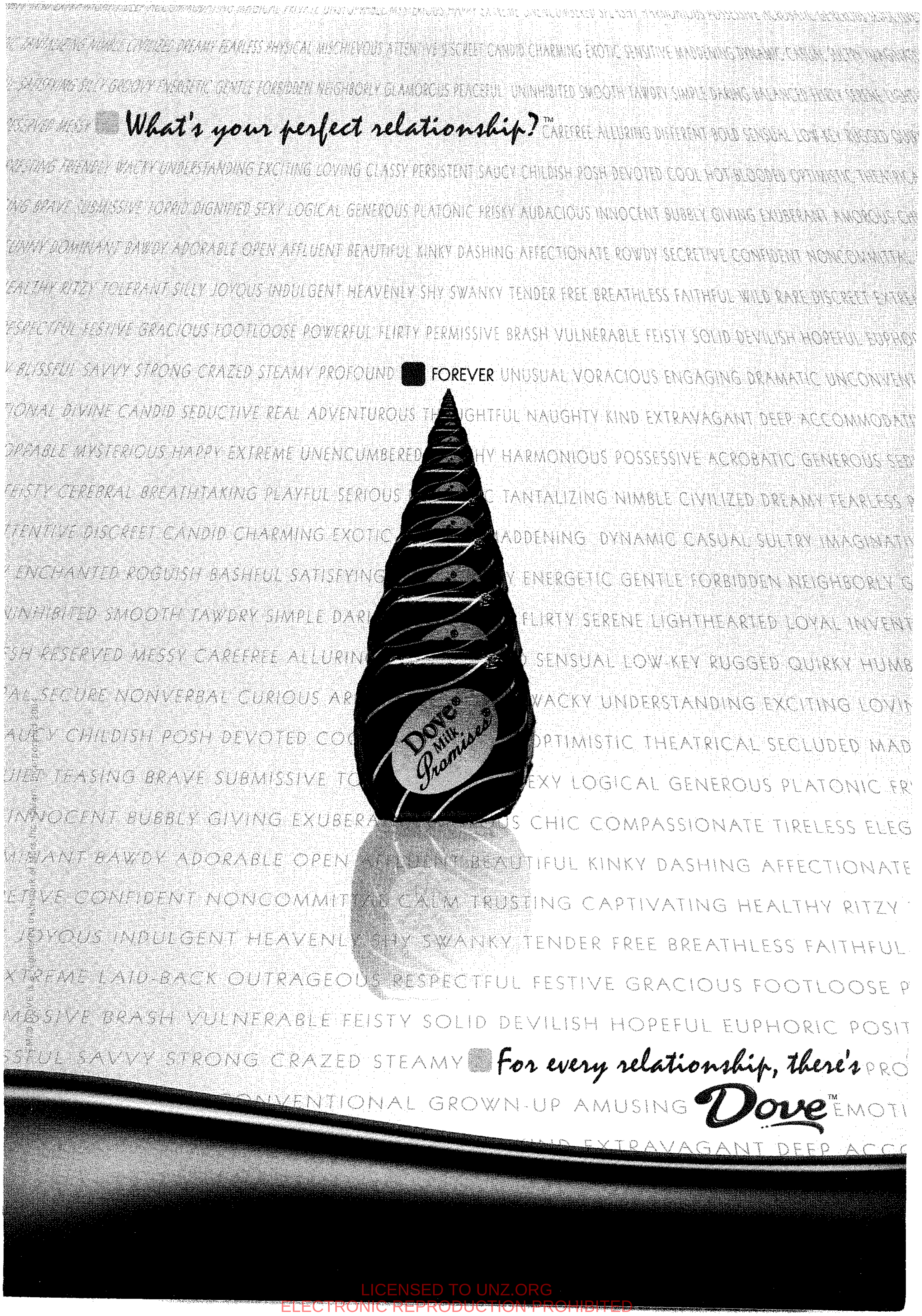
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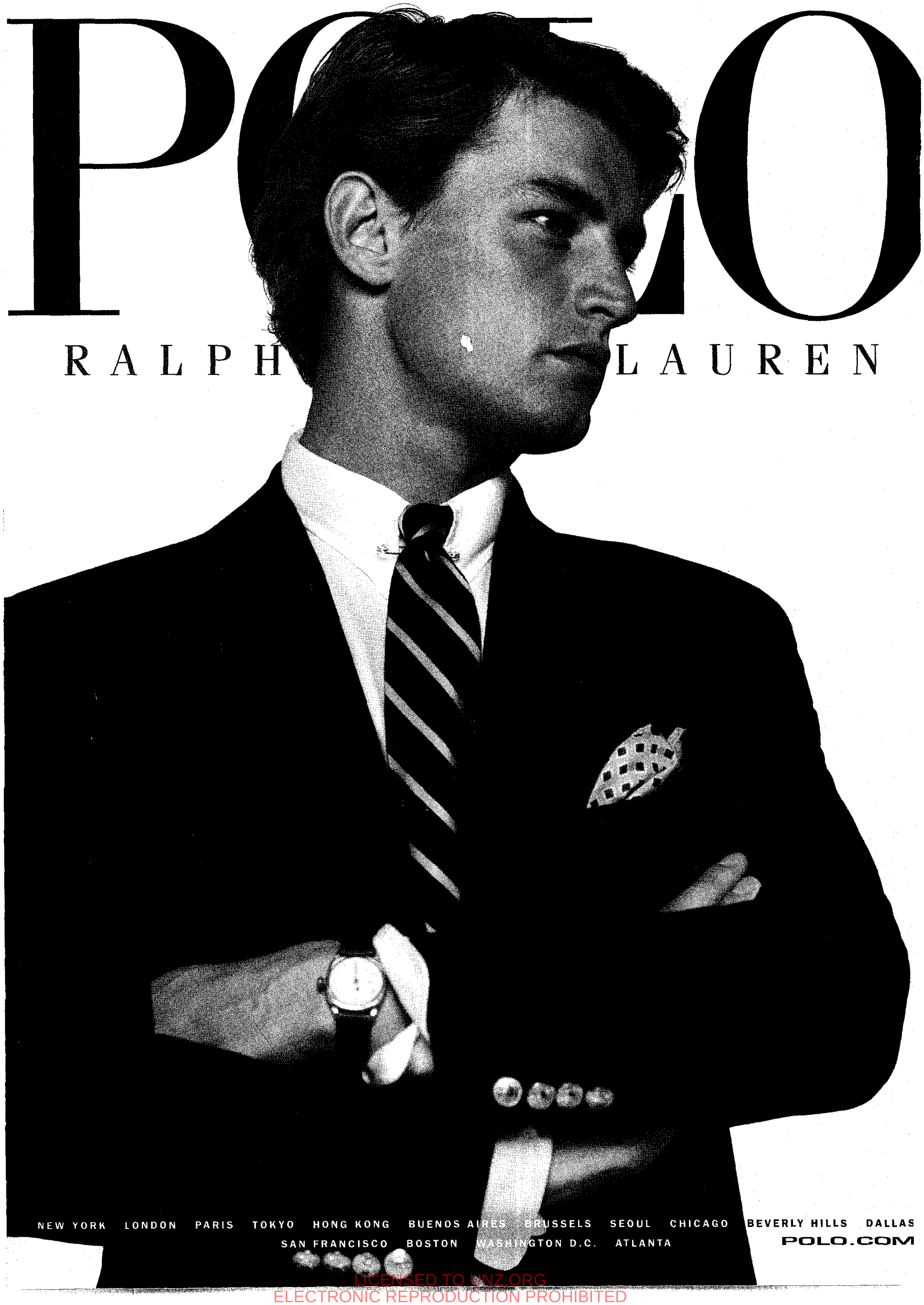
DOMINANT BAWDY ADORABLE OPEN AFFLUENT BEAUTIFUL KINKY DASHING AFFECTIONATE
SECRETIVE CONFIDENT NONCOMMITTAL CALM TRUSTING CAPTIVATING HEALTHY RITZY
JOYOUS INDULGENT HEAVENLY SHY SWANKY TENDER FREE BREATHLESS FAITHFUL
EXTREME LAID-BACK OUTRAGEOUS RESPECTFUL FESTIVE GRACIOUS FOOTLOOSE
PERMISSIVE BRASH VULNERABLE FEISTY SOLID DEVILISH HOPEFUL EUPHORIC POSITIVE
BLISSFUL SAVVY STRONG CRAZED STEAMY PROFOUND
UNCONVENTIONAL GROWN-UP AMUSING EMOTIONAL
KIND EXTRAVAGANT DEEP ACCOMMODATING
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



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